THE SPEAKER'S BIBLE

EDITED BY

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THE SPEAKER'S BIBLE

EDITED BY THE REV.

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EDITOR OF
'THE EXPOSITORY TIMES' 'THE DICTIONARY OF THE BIBLE'
'THE ENCYCLOPÆDIA OF RELIGION AND ETHICS'
AND OTHER WORKS

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THE SPEAKER'S BIBLE

THE EPISTLE OF JAMES

INTRODUCTION

THE LETTER—ITS CONTENTS AND CHARACTER.

The Epistle of James is an Epistle of imperatives: there are fifty-four of them. It is a homily of exhortation on many topics. It has little of the personal note that distinguishes Paul's letters. It is really a *diatribe* in the Hellenic fashion on the theme of practical Christianity, an 'open letter' on sundry vices of the religious folk of the Christian community.

The hortatory mind is not systematic, and the letter, with its frequent glancings aside to point an adage, defies close analysis. The preacher's eye roams over the church life of his time and his indignation flashes swiftly from failing to failing. The fine vivacity, vehemence and glowing fervour of the Apostolic heart cannot be captured in a bald outline. Yet it may be well to disentangle the thread of thought.

Who complains of persecution? It is a discipline to be welcomed. Life with its ups and downs calls for the understanding mind and God will give the grace of wisdom to the man of unwavering faith. Rich and poor alike should rejoice in the capsizals of this transitory existence: it is endurance that wins the crown of life. It is wrong to blame God, the Author of all good, for our temptations, for these really come from dallying with our lusts. Not petulant outbursts become Christian men, but humble receiving of God's will; not hearing but doing His word. Lip profession is valueless. Religion in its purity is practical—the care of the poor and the needy. The faith of Jesus does not allow of respect of persons. Away with snobbery and toadying to the rich in the churches! God calls the poor to the Kingdom, whereas their rich fellow-churchmen oppress them and drag them before courts of law. 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself'—is not that the royal law of Christianity, to break which is to break the whole law of liberty? There is mercy for those who show mercy. Creed or 'faith' is not enough; it is futile without practice. Abraham and Rahab were doers as well as believers.

Too many want to be teachers, spokesmen of the faith. But speech is a dangerous power: the tongue is hard to tame. Blessing and cursing should not come from the same mouth. Speech reflects the heart within and heaven-sent wisdom manifests itself in peaceableness and gentleness. But the faction and bitter wrangling now so rampant show that the world has taken hold of the Christian community. Repent, repent, urges the writer. Humble yourselves. Cleanse hand and heart and tongue. Traders buy and sell and plan for gain, forgetting that life is unsubstantial as a wreath of smoke. The day of the Lord is coming. Let rich men beware. The rust on their gold is a witness against them, and the cries of the defrauded are noted in heaven.

Patience, therefore, brethren! The Lord is coming. Recall the patience of husbandmen, of the prophets, of Job. The Lord is pitiful. Keep free from oaths, confess your faults one to another, pray for one another and especially

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for the sick, for great is the power of a righteous man's prayer—witness the case of Elijah.

Such are the prevailing notes of an utterance rich in crisp and pointed counsel, fiery and vehement against injustice and hypocrisy. It is a revival of the Old Testament prophetic manner. Reminiscences of the Sermon on the Mount in the Matthean version flash out frequently (ii. 13, cf. Mt. v. 7; iii. 12, cf. Mt. vii. 16; v. 12, cf. Mt. v. 34-37). Of Christian doctrine there is such scant suggestion that the letter has been regarded (Spitta and Massebieau) as a Jewish document edited for Christian use, while J. H. Moulton argues that it is a plea to unconverted Jews by the one Christian leader for whom the Jews had a profound regard—hence the scrupulous delicacy about obtruding the Christian claims and the scandal of the Cross, and the casual weaving in of sayings of Jesus rather than their distinct assertion. The attack on faith without works has been interpreted as a polemic against Paulinism. But that is to forget that Paul himself has written to the same effect in burning words: 'though I have all faith so that I could remove mountains and have not charity, I am nothing' (1 Co. xiii. 1-3). With Paul 'faith' is ethical, and invariably implies the fruits of the spirit and never the futile profession of a creed as here assailed. What James has in view is a *perversion* of the Pauline 'justification by faith' such as came with the intellectualizing of the faith by Greek minds lacking in the wholesome Hebraic reverence for right living.

WHO WROTE THE LETTER?

The sturdy ethical note is the first and obvious sign of Hebrew authorship. Though the Greek is of the best in the New Testament, too good to be a mere translation of an Aramaic document, there are evidences of Jewish mentality throughout; *e.g.*, the Hebraic colouring of various phrases (i. 8, 15, 19; ii. 7-14; iii. 12-18), reminiscences of prophetic style (iv. 4, v. 1), acquaintance with the Wisdom literature (iii., iv. 14), and with Philo (i. 17; iii. 6). The appeal is even more Jewish than Christian at several points.

But is our author a Palestinian or a Jew of the Dispersion? Can he be none other than James the Lord's brother? This James was the acknowledged head of the Christians at Jerusalem and was leader of the section that stood for strict observance of Judaistic rules and regulations as opposed to Paul the Apostle. At first an unbeliever, he had become a convert to the faith and straightway, from his kinship to Jesus, a powerful pillar of the Church. Acts (xv. 13-33) attributes to him a speech and circular letter which should be compared with this Epistle. No reference is here made to the controversy on the Mosaic Law which reigned for a considerable time in the early Church. Could James address an encyclical to Christian communities without mention of this vexed question? It is argued, however, that there are two periods in the life of James when he might have composed this letter—before the controversy rose (*c.*A.D. 40) or after it had ceased to agitate the Church (*c.* 60). Certainly the attractive possibility of this distinguished authorship is not without support. The robust moral sense, the mind steeped in the Sermon on the Mount and kindred sayings of Jesus, the ardent hope of the Parousia, the references to figs and olives, the note of authority—all these features can be quoted as pointing that way. Piquant, too, would be the passage about that mischievous member, the tongue, if the author, as the brother of Jesus, remorsefully recalled the days when with other members of his family he cast at Jesus the bitter jibe, 'He is beside himself' (Mk. iii. 21).[1] But there are serious difficulties in the way of this authorship. The fluent Greek, the quotation of the Septuagint version, the knowledge of Philo the Alexandrian, the general allusiveness of the style, so typical of a man of culture—would we expect these of a Galilean peasant? Why should Jesus be named but three times? Would one who had witnessed the passion of Jesus pass over that and refer rather to the patience of Job? Could a Christian of the

[1] See further, *Note on James, the Lord's Brother*, p. 4.

first generation fail to refer to the Resurrection, the proofs of Messiahship, the obligatoriness of the Mosaic Law and other vexed questions of the time, especially when James was a protagonist of strong opinions? Would the Church so early shed its fresh enthusiasm to become a prey to the vices here attacked, viz. whining under persecution, snobbery, oppression of the poor, cant and moneymaking? Are the Church life and organization as hinted at not more developed, and the Christian social consciousness more mature, than we should expect so early as A.D. 40 or 60.

Again, there would seem to be sprinkled reminiscences of Paul's Epistles.[1] There are also parallels with Hebrews, and more particularly 1 Peter.[2] Would it not be beneath the dignity of a leader like James to borrow from other Christian writings? Moreover there are similarities to the second century *Didachê* to explain.[3] Finally, how could a pamphlet from such an acknowledged Christian leader escape quotation earlier than the middle of the second century. The *Shepherd of Hermas* (*c.* 140) has the first probable quotation. The Epistle is not mentioned in the Muratorian canon, and is first definitely quoted by Origen, while Eusebius admits that even then it is held by some to be spurious. Evidently the Jacobean authorship was suspect from the beginning. These difficulties are only partially met by postulating a date late in James' lifetime, after the dust of the conflict on circumcision had died down (? *c.* A.D. 62). Modern scholarship tends to place the Epistle in the second century, in an age when the glow had died out of church life and the 'blanched Christology of the *Didachê* and Diognetus' (Moffatt) held sway, an era of sober, vapid morality such as marks the *Shepherd of Hermas*. On that finding, James betrays the temper not of a primitive, but of a decadent, faith, when pulsing enthusiasms had died away and the religion of the living Christ had congealed into the formal precepts of a new law to be slavishly followed, the painful copybook Christianity of the uninspired.

[1] i. 2-4 cf. Ro. v. 3-5; i. 6, cf. Ro. iv. 20; i. 22, cf. Ro. ii. 13; ii. 11, cf. Ro. ii. 22-25; ii. 21, cf. Ro. iv. 1; ii. 24, cf. Ro. iii. 28; iv. 1, cf. Ro. vii. 23; iv. 4, 7, cf. Ro. viii. 7; iv. 11, cf. Ro. ii. 1; i. 26, cf. 1 Co. iii. 18, Gal. vi. 3; ii. 5, cf. 1 Co. i. 27; iii. 15, cf. 1 Co. ii. 14; ii. 8-12 cf. Gal. v. 14, Ro. xiii. 8f.; ii. 10, cf. Gal. v. 3; iv. 4-5, cf. Gal. v. 17 (Moffatt).

[2] iii. 18, cf. Heb. xii. 11; i. 11, cf. 1 P. i. 24-25; iv. 6, cf. 1 P. v. 5; v. 20, cf. 1 P. iv. 8, in all of which the same passages from the Old Testament are quoted; iv. 7-10 cf. 1 P. v. 6).

[3] 'Thou shalt not be double minded (*dignomon*), nor double tongued (*diglossos*) . . .' (*Did. ch.* 2, *cf.* Ja. 1[8]). 'In the church thou shalt confess thy transgressions, and shalt not come forward for thy prayer with an evil conscience' (*Did.* ch. 4; *cf.* Ja. 5[16]).

TO WHOM IS THE EPISTLE ADDRESSED?

The letter is written to the 'twelve tribes which are of the Dispersion.' This has been interpreted as meaning Christian churches composed entirely of Jews of the Dispersion. Probably the churches of Babylonia and Mesopotamia would meet the case. The designation however may be merely a generic one signifying the new ideal Israel, *i.e.*, the scattered fragments of Christendom throughout the world. These churches know ills without and ills within: persecution tries them and great clefts divide the rich from the poor. A predominantly Jewish flavour is assumed in these communities; at least appeal is made to Jewish sentiment and tradition, *e.g.*, in such phrases as 'Abraham, our Father,' 'Lord God of Sabaoth,' the term 'synagogue' possibly, the appeal to Job, the prophets, Elijah, Rahab, etc., the much-ado about oaths, the pursuit of wealth, the reverence for the Law. The vices they display are not such as we expect from those who in the earliest days had wrenched themselves free at great social sacrifice from Judaism or paganism: are they not the failings of churchmen of the second generation, who had inherited their faith at second-hand rather than purchased it at great cost?

NOTE ON JAMES, THE LORD'S BROTHER.

The association of this Epistle with James, the Lord's brother, calls for an enquiry into what history and tradition have to tell us of his life and character.

The early environment of James would be that of Joseph's home at Nazareth. The carpenter's shop, the simple life of a Galilean village, the formative influences of upbringing in a large family, the quickening impulses that must have come from association with Jesus and Mary His Mother—all made their contribution to the education of James. Tradition adds that he was consecrated from his mother's womb, drank neither wine nor strong drink, ate no animal food, never suffered a razor on his head, never anointed with oil or used a bath, wore no woollen but only linen garments. He would experience the hardships of poverty and know early the simple devoutness and goodness of the poor and needy—'the quiet of the land' who were ever waiting for the consolation of Israel and the coming of the Kingdom. He would share the sympathy of Jesus for the humble and unworldly folk, and we may surmise that while Jesus saw with compassion how hard it was for rich men to enter the Kingdom, James, with the sterner judgment of common men, would nurse a smouldering wrath against their iniquity and inhumanity and unbrotherliness. The social inequalities experienced in early life may easily have left James bitter, while Jesus was magnanimously unresentful. James would pass through the trying days of cleavage and misunderstanding in the home when Jesus took a path that perplexed His kinsfolk. 'Even his brethren did not believe on him' (Mk. iii. 21, Jn. vii. 5). But probably James, as, next to Jesus, the ablest and most discerning of the family, came even in His lifetime to appreciate his Brother. Perhaps the Resurrection experience(1 Co. xv. 7) caused a complete upheaval in his as in Paul's case. Certainly his identification with the believing band seems to have come early, and the place he speedily obtained in the Christian community at Jerusalem was the foremost. His relationship to Jesus and his knowledge—drawn from long continued intimacies and sharing of confidences—marked him out for leadership. His character apparently confirmed his position. Tradition has it that he used to enter the Temple alone, and would often be discovered on his knees in prayer pleading for remission of the people's sins, his knees becoming hard as a camel's through his incessant supplications.

In early Christian history he figures prominently. To him Peter sends news of his escape from prison (Ac. xii. 17). He headed the Jerusalem Church and apparently was spokesman for the Judaizing party, being the author of the decision (Ac. xv.) that made for peace. James was too convinced a Jew to be other than zealous for maintaining his precepts of Judaism even in Christianity, but we need not hold him responsible for the bigotry and intrigue of those who sheltered under his name and worked against Paul (Gal. ii. 12). His authority, indeed, probably won over the intransigeants to allow the compromise and admit Gentiles without circumcision. Perhaps we may have a trace of his mind and sympathies in the condition accompanying the arrangement: 'only they would that we should remember the poor'(Gal. ii. 10). Loyal to the agreement with Paul, he received the veteran Apostle on his last visit to Jerusalem (Ac. xxi. 18), and it may have been his diplomacy that persuaded Paul to carry out the ritual of certain vows as a concession to extreme Jewish opinion.

A certain stern integrity in the man probably explains his title, 'James the Just.' That quality likewise lies behind the story of his death. His success in commending the Messianic claims of Jesus roused the Jews to hostile action. Set on a pinnacle of the Temple, he was called on to publicly deny the Messiahship of Jesus. His reply was to declare that he saw Jesus sitting on the right hand of power and about to come on the clouds of heaven. So they cast him down and stoned him while he prayed, 'I beseech thee, O Lord God and Father, forgive them, for they know

not what they do.' Then a fuller's club hastened the relief of death (A.D. 62). The details of this account are so reminiscent of Stephen's martyrdom that they must remain doubtful. But the qualities of the man remain. A flaming preacher of righteousness, a tactful administrator, a man of deep personal piety and unflinching courage, a friend of the poor and the needy—no unworthy son of the carpenter's home.

JOHN DOW.

The Prince of Believers.

Ja. i. 1.—'James, a servant (RVm 'bondservant') of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ.'

THAT James was the Lord's brother Mr. Gossip, at least, does not doubt, as the following extracts from a sermon in *The Expository Times* [1] prove.

If we were asked what character in the New Testament offered our Lord the most audacious faith, most of us, probably, would fix upon the penitent thief and that strange trust of his, which shone out of the midnight darkness, when faith seemed sheer unreason and mere imbecility. And yet I, for one, am not sure I would not give my vote for James. For to him it was given to believe that the child with whom he had grown up in the old nursery at home, beside whom he had learned his lessons year in and year out; with whom, as a little fellow, he had played at marriages and funerals and make-believe; often, no doubt, as a boy will, quarrelling with Him over some small trifle; with whom he had slept in the same little bed at night,—that the child who every evening knelt down with him at the same mother's knee, and day by day learned about God from the same mother's lips, was Himself the Son of God, the Word, the express image of God's person—his own old playmate, his own brother, with whom he had lived for thirty years! Even the New Testament can show no faith so strong and daring and bewildering as that.

[1] Vol. xxxiii. p. 365ff.

Yet James was characteristically sane and cautious, not at all the kind of man to be swept off his feet. So cautious, indeed, that when his brother set out on His mission, James for one flatly refused to countenance Him as a prophet; would have nothing to do with Him and His claims; was not at all exultant while the people were eagerly flocking about Him, and His name was being buzzed to and fro by excited groups at every street corner; was, indeed, much ashamed of Him and His ongoings, scandalized by the pitiful stories that came home on every wind of how He, an ignorant peasant, a mere village carpenter, dared to attack godly and learned people like the Pharisees, who had given their whole lives to religion and theology; ashamed of how He was consorting with the very scum, had sunk so low as to endeavour to buttress up His failing cause with recruits like publicans and sinners, from the contamination of whose very touch James, like all decent people, would have twitched away his garment's hem; of the blasphemous stories He kept telling, comparing the great God to the most unseemly things, until at last poor James could stand it no longer; and roundly asserting that his brother had gone off His head, actually set out to bring the poor sufferer home and shut Him up where at least He could do no further harm, and bring no more disgrace on His afflicted family. Peter and James and John might be taken in, and throw in their lot with the movement, but James held ostentatiously aloof; other poor fools might believe this was the Christ, but James was quite convinced this was no prophet, but a self-deceived impostor; no Messiah, but a lunatic! So it was to the very end. Be sure that James was in Jerusalem all those Passover days when Christ was being dragged about from one tribunal to another, and at last was led out to a felon's death; but he appears to have taken no interest in the proceedings whatsoever, simply to have gone on with his worship in the Temple, praying, no doubt, with earnestness and a sore heart for his misguided and most miserable brother, the brother who for years had been the family's cross and heartbreak and disgrace.

So true is it that one can live for half a lifetime within sight of Christ and see no special beauty in Him that we should desire Him. It is, indeed, their very nearness to the Master that is most people's difficulty; because they have grown up beside Him that they so ignore and overlook Him. If we could come to the Gospels with fresh and unjaded minds, could open Luke for the first time, how it would thrill and move us to our depths—to learn that the great God loves us like that, that He is so self-sacrificing and so self-forgetful and so wholly lovable! Think what it would be to turn the leaves and come for the first time upon the Prodigal, or the Upper Room! But the old threadbare words have passed so often through our minds that we now listen to them wearily and yawningly, and with a wandering attention, as to a trite and sapless commonplace that awakens hardly any flicker of interest. If we had never had experience of God's forgiveness, and could now make proof of it for the first time, would not our lives be flooded by a sudden sunshine, and our hearts be gay as children who must dance because their happy feet will not keep still? But because we have worn a pathway to the fountain open for uncleanness, because we have received God's grace so often and so faithfully, we have largely lost sense of its marvel; can accept it nowadays with small surprise and less emotion; hardly anything of the old thrill, and little of the inspiration it once brought. 'It is a great thing,' says old Halyburton, 'to receive God's pardon every time as though this were the only time we ever could receive it.' But our familiarity with it has largely deadened the gospel's appeal, robbed it for us of half its force. It is our nearness to the Master that blinds many of us to the mystery of Jesus' person, to the wonder of His power and love. We read how Christ did marvellous works; and then how He came into His own country; and with that we draw a long breath before we turn the page. For what will this next chapter not contain! If He wrought such extraordinary things for these aliens and strangers, what will He not do for the women whom He knew as lassies, now that they were ill; for the men who had been at school with Him in their desperate need? But when we turn the page, it is to find a blank—only these few words written, 'Here he could do no mighty works, because of their unbelief,' save that He healed a few sick folk.

The fact of the matter is that James was the religious member of the family, or at least had the credit and the reputation of so being—James and not Jesus. A conscientious, grave, and austere man, he had devoted himself to God's service, and become a Nazirite, wore the long hair of that honourable order, practised their asceticisms and their self-denials, spent long hours a day upon his knees in prayer. The whole life of the house had to be governed largely to suit his religious habits, and no doubt this was gladly done; for every Jewish mother counted it an honour to have a Nazirite among her sons. Jesus took such food as was set before Him; but there were many things James could not touch. Jesus no doubt rose early and spent hours alone among the hills, but in the daytime He had little time for prayer, had to work hard and long to feed so many mouths; and when the evening came there were the little ones to help, and the mother to take care of in a hundred little ways that no one ever saw but He; and always there would be some child, crying and very desperate, calling for Him, with a broken toy clenched in its hot little hand for Him to mend; there were tired folk to be helped, or some sick neighbour to be comforted, or someone who had fallen into sin, and with whom everyone else had broken, to be sought out and cheered. His was a full day, crowded with little kindnesses; but no one appears to have thought of it as specially religious! Everyone knew that where He was, there there were happiness and sunshine; everyone saw that always He was thinking about others, never of Himself. But in time they just accepted that, as we all do. It was His way to be kind and unselfish; and they thought no more about it. But James was always at his prayers, and always at his fasts,

and always at his religious exercises, till the very bairns, who hailed his Elder Brother with shouts of delight and came tumbling to meet Him, grew hushed and awed and awkward in presence of the spare, ascetic, other-worldly saint, whom everyone could see was a saint.

Long years after, looking back, James spoke with a certain bitterness and fierceness of these things, warned others that to fast and pray and busy oneself in religious ordinances is an empty thing unless it is having effect upon one's character and daily life.

These things, he says, are not religion; but simply the means whereby we may attain to it; the fuel with which it is fed: and the thing itself is to be kind of heart, and free from selfishness, to think of others, and to spend oneself for others; to make the world a brighter place by lifting burdens from tired shoulders, and sharing the sorrows of sad hearts, and helping those who have no claim on us, except that they are needy and that we have help to give. It is not difficult to understand what face had risen up before him when he defines religion as a great unselfishness and a compassion and a giving of oneself away with both full, generous hands. Is your faith bearing fruit like that? he cries, in his own pointed way. Are your prayers teaching you to gain the Christlike mind? Because religion, as I saw the Master live it out, was a most practical and homely thing.

Have we learned that, you and I? Some people never do, go to their death with eyes unopened. Ruskin has a very scornful passage on our phrase 'divine service'; telling us that, while it is right and fitting that a child should ask its father for what it would like, and thank him for what he has given, no child would call that serving him! Yet that is what God's children term it—that is all the service many of them ever give! Without prayer we can never keep the Christlike mind alive; the thing cannot be done. But prayer and church attendance and the like are not religion, far less Christlikeness. For that is to be self-denying, to forget oneself, to think of others, to refuse to shut oneself within one's narrow interests, to make our aim not how much we can get, but how much we can do, and all this in the little nothings that make up our daily round.

Although James had no faith in his brother, Christ believed in James; and probably few nails in the cross He had to carry hurt Him more than that He Himself had so to vex and wound His brother's heart. Apart from natural affection, there was a sincerity, an earnestness, a sterling worth in him that called out Christ's regard. Of him, too, surely it might have been written, as of that other not dissimilar soul, that Jesus beholding him loved him, with a frank, admiring love that showed plainly in His eyes. And accordingly one of the first of those to whom He appeared after His resurrection was His own brother.

What these two said to one another in that unimaginable interview, the Scriptures, with their innate delicacy, give no hint. 'A word did it,' Savonarola used to say, speaking of his altered character and life, 'a word did it'; but he never told the word. No more did James drop any hint; only, like Saul on the Damascus road, he too saw and believed.

> High things were spoken there, unhanded down;
> Only they saw thee from the secret shrine
> Returning with hot cheeks and kindled eyes.

How many of us, stubborn in our unbelief, or careless and indifferent, have been so suddenly arrested, found ourselves face to face with Christ, this Master whom we had ignored, if not disliked; and all at once we saw. Just how it came about we do not perhaps know, and could not perhaps tell. Only what had been blank to us grew full of meaning; what had seemed utterly impossible was seen to be the most sure and most glorious fact; what had been nothing, everything. 'James, the slave of Jesus Christ,' is how he opens his Epistle.

Of James' service to the Church it were not easy to speak too much or too highly. Even apart from his relationship to the Master, his own great gifts of mind, and purity of soul, and saintliness of character, marked him out as a leader even in the circle of the first dis-

ciples. And to him there was given a post than which none was more dangerous or delicate or difficult to fill. For nowhere was the Church more vexed and harried than at its headquarters in Jerusalem, and yet it was here, on the scene of his Master's martyrdom, among the very men who had contrived it, that he chose to serve and bear his witness. When the persecution broke out, nearly all the others scattered, bearing the gospel north and south and east and west; but James' heart clung to Jerusalem; and he seems to have faced the danger and stayed on. A less wise or conciliatory leader, or one less sympathetic to the old religion, would have been hurried to an early death. But, so old Hegesippus tells us, James' austere saintliness won reverence even from the Jews—this man who prayed so much for the people in the Temple that his knees became hard as a camel's; whom almost alone among Christians, Jews could understand, and did admire.

Nor was that all. For what particularly strikes one in time is his open-mindedness, which, contrary to the normal course, grew with the years, not lessened. All James' instincts were conservative and cautious; the whole turn of his mind was such that naturally he would have been narrow and prejudiced and even bigoted. Left to himself, he would never have gone to the Gentiles; and when tidings that Peter and then Paul had done so reached him, he felt that things were not going his way, nor as he would have chosen. Yet when the clamour grew, and the orthodox folk appealed to him, sure of a favourable ruling, though he knew that it meant endless trouble to himself, the man did violence to the bias of his nature and the set of his mind, and boldly threw his influence into the scale for liberty of action. It is not my way, he said; and I myself could not have done it. But God seems to have spoken, and revealed that they are right, not I; that what I imagined to be principle was merely private prejudice, and now that He has taught me, I dare not oppose His will. And it was largely James' tact and conciliatoriness and humility that held the Church together, and saved it from disruption into half a dozen warring sects.

All which is evidence of real greatness of soul. It is so easy to sulk and be stubborn when things will not go our way, to elevate our likings and our prejudices into principles; so hard to give way gracefully and heartily, to welcome new truth, when we see that it is truth, though not what we hoped and believed would prove truth, but the opposite. A soul that keeps its windows open to the light and air, that is willing to listen when God speaks to it, that is prepared to follow truth wherever it may lead, is one with which God can do anything. But most of us are thrawn and dogged, hold to our views of things just because they are ours, do not want further light—will not admit that it is light, insist that the accustomed is the real, and are sadly inhospitable to the unfamiliar. For no gift should we pray God oftener than for openness of mind, especially in these times of transition, when everything, thrown back into the crucible, is emerging in new forms—most of all if we are growing old. For ageing minds, like ageing limbs, grow stiff and inelastic, find it increasingly difficult to twist themselves to the new point of view, and increasingly easy to dismiss the novel as mere decadence and heresy, although sometimes it is God's voice they are resisting. It was not easy for James, yet he did it. There are people to whom certain of the virtues seem to come by nature, and others for whom they are desperately hard. And it is they who, doing violence to their natural disposition, gain what was none of theirs who are the greatest saints. As Newman says, it is not the ninety-nine points where it is easy, but the one where it is hard, that is the test.

And what makes James' triumph more remarkable is that he was both a passionate and a quick-tongued man. No one can read his Epistle without learning that; without discovering where his shoe pinched and his soul bled. Again and again he returns to it with shame and self-loathing, heaping up dreadful words of shuddering and disgust. The very snakes can be robbed of their fangs and venom, but the tongue can no man tame;

and there are years of struggle and of failure in that bitter cry. Do what we will, it masters us, into hot angry words, and bitterness of judgment; into a deadly poison of detraction; into talking about others, meaning indeed no harm, and yet none the less doing it; hinting faults, passing on what we have heard without the slightest knowledge or the least investigation, wounding others' reputation merely to give a fillip to a conversation, or revive it when it drags. It is, cries James, the very fire of hell aflame in our own nature: and as he cries the man tears at the Nessus shirt that stings and burns him, yet which he cannot get off. It is what makes hell hell, and it is ablaze in us, and will not be trampled out; leaps into flame, tread desperately on it how we will. All which seems unreal and exaggerated to us, who keep stumbling half a dozen times a day into such sins, and think no more about them, never remember our hot words or our idle chatter about other folk, account these very little faults hardly worth chronicling. And yet, as James looks back, the thing about Christ that appears to have remained most vividly with him, the characteristic that bewildered him the most, was just His perfect mastery of His tongue. Often as James as man and boy had been irritating, often as he had spoken woundingly, often as he had misjudged and misunderstood Him, never once had Jesus been betrayed into passion or ill-humour or one unguarded word. That seems to have been the element in His perfection that haunted James, and humbled him, and stirred him to a wondering envy. If any man seemeth to be religious and bridleth not his tongue, he has but small resemblance to the Master as I saw Him.

We have a great fight before us! Yet, as we enter it, let us catch something of James' intrepidity and sheer gallantry of spirit. There never was a finer spiritual fighter, one with steadier eyes, and a heart less afraid. When a temptation leaps at us we, for the most part, whimper and snivel and pity ourselves, go into action whipt before the issue is joined. But not so James, who exults in battle—'Count it all joy,' he says—hails a temptation from afar as a new opportunity of victory, another field where freedom can be won and shrewd blows struck, defines it as a chance, not of sinning, as we do, but of winning.

One who never turned his back but marched
  breast forward,
Never doubted clouds would break,
Never dreamed, though right were worsted,
  wrong would triumph,
Held we fall to rise, are baffled to fight better,
  Sleep to wake.

The soul that faces what life sends so gallantly and with such utter faith cannot be vanquished. Could we but gain the spirit of this doughty fighter, we too would pass on from strength to strength, from one impossible triumph to another and yet greater, would really find that all things work together for our good.

The Uses of Adversity.

Ja. i. 2-4.—'My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.'

Thus abruptly does James plunge into the heart of a difficult matter. The question how to meet trial has long exercised men: James answers it almost before he asks it. He has no doubt as to the temper in which it should be met. According to him, joy is the fitting frame for us when we encounter vicissitudes, pain or sorrow.

James does not bid us accept this doctrine of joy in tribulation upon his personal authority. It is no philosopher's *ipse dixit*. He appeals to his readers' own experience: 'Knowing that the proof of your faith worketh patience.' 'Knowing' *i.e.*, 'in that ye are continually finding out and getting to know.' The verb and the tense indicate progressive and continuous knowledge, as by the experience of daily life; and this teaches us that proving and testing not only brings to light, but brings

into existence, patience. This patience, this abiding firm under attack or pressure, must be allowed full scope to regulate all our conduct; and then we shall see why trials are a matter for joy rather than sorrow, when we find ourselves moving onwards towards, not the barrenness of stoical 'self-sufficiency' but the fullness of Divine protection. 'That ye may be perfect and entire, lacking in nothing,' is perhaps a reminiscence of Christ's words, 'Ye therefore shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.'

1. The first effect of trial for our perfection is that it tests faith; it is the proof or proving of our faith. Faith is the foundation of all religious life; it is that by which we cling to God and to all the comforts of His revelation. If trial tests faith, it tests the very foundation of all we believe in and hope for. Nothing is so needful for us as to be sure of it. If we should be sure of anything, we should be sure of faith, and trial is the making sure of it. The word suggests the testing of metals. As the gold ore is tested by fire, melted in the crucible that all the dross may be taken away, so trial is the fire in which God tests our faith, that it may be without alloy. When He has tried us, we shall come forth as gold. The well-rooted tree when tossed by the storm only strikes its roots deeper into the ground. If it survives the storm it is stronger for the blast, not weaker. When God tempted Abraham, asking him to offer up his only son, the command must have entered like iron into his soul; but when the trial was over, and he had nobly stood the test, God said to him, 'Now I *know* that thou fearest God.' What unshaken trust, what unbounded faith, Abraham must have gained through that one victory!

So it always is. Trial tests and purifies and strengthens faith. When a man has come through the fire by reason of his trust in God, when he knows that but for that trust he would have been broken and overwhelmed, he learns more trust. He is able for the next trial. His faith has been tested. The reverse is equally true. Where there has been little trial, there has been little test, little to exercise faith, little to bring out its quality and prove its strength, little experience of what we are able to bear. We never know ourselves till we are tried, till occasions come by way of temptation that call out all our powers. The strain caused by some unexpected calamity may reveal defects of character which we should not otherwise have discovered, or a possibility of faith about which we might never have dreamed. We may have thought we had set our affections on things above, but a bank failure, an unlucky speculation, a bad season, reveals to us how much of our treasure is still on earth. We thought we had got over our ill-temper, but a sudden provocation shows us how small is our self-command. We need to practise the mind of Christ before we learn to meet trials and temptations in a right spirit.

¶ You have learned long ago that the best learning comes from trial, and that often the most striking views of spiritual things, as of natural, come with some sharp and abrupt turn in the road, leaving an image which lives long after the rough jolt has passed away.[1]

2. Thus we gradually wear on to the next stage: the testing of faith worketh patience. 'Patience' is a favourite word of James. Throughout his experience he exalts and inculcates this grace. He shows how necessary it is in common life. 'Behold,' he says, 'the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient over it, until it receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord is at hand.' He asks his readers to take the prophets also for an example of suffering and of patience, and reminds them of the patience of Job. The word 'patience' means persevering endurance, bearing up under trial and not giving way, continuing to endure in the hope and belief that we are in God's hands, waiting in calmness upon the Divine will. It is not sullen acquiescence, bearing pain as the dumb brutes, submitting to the inevitable with stoical deter-

[1] *Life and Letters of John Cairns*, 382.

mination; nor is it the submission of cynical indifference, bearing trial as if we never felt it and were in no way affected by it, trampling on our feelings, and treating suffering as if it did not exist. It is neither supineness nor indifference, but rather hopeful, believing persistency, endurance. It is bearing up under our own load, and continuing our journey in spite of it, shouldering our burden not sullenly, but with thankfulness. This, James says, is the result of the testing of faith: it worketh patience, endurance.

Can we see how it does so? Trial, we have learned, tests faith, it proves whether it be strong and genuine. But it does more than this. It is not only that trial tests faith, but that the process is continuous: no sooner is one trial overcome than another takes its place. It is the continuousness of temptation, the condition of being tested, that worketh patience. The temptation in the wilderness was the trial of Christ's faith; it was, so to speak, the one great shock at the outset of His career that proved its quality, but the tempter left Him only for a season. It was by the repeated testing of faith that He gained endurance. He learned obedience, learned it as a scholar does his lesson, line upon line, by the things which He suffered. One trial may test our faith, but it needs many testings to develop endurance. The strongest men are those who, as we say, have come through most. Their unshaken trust is the result of many testings bravely endured, until at length through much tribulation they become 'perfect and entire.'

Let no man think that sudden in a minute
All is accomplished and the work is done;—
Though with thine earliest dawn thou should'st begin it
Scarce were it ended in thy setting sun.[1]

3. The last stage is from endurance to perfection. 'Let patience have its perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, lacking in nothing.' We catch in these words an echo of Christ's saying, 'He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved.' 'Be ye perfect': James's meaning is that it is not enough to go on enduring for a time. We shall lose the good we have gained if we give way after suffering even for a long time. Let patience have its full effect, let it attain its end. God is working to an end in all our trials. Our dark days, our hard tasks, the terrible persistency and continuance of trial, are really the proofs of the faithfulness of God in the working out of His great purpose—that we should be perfect and entire, lacking in nothing.

The words recall the conditions of the sacrifice in the older order—the beasts for the offering were to be without blemish. So the Christian must desire to be whole.

That we may bring, if need arise,
No maim'd or broken sacrifice.

To such a hope we should look. This is the true end of the process into which the soul is plunged, and it is not impossible to count even sore trials a sheer joy if only they help to this end:

Was the trial sore?
Temptation sharp? Thank God a second time!
Why comes temptation but for man to meet,
And master and make crouch beneath his foot,
And so be pedestaled in triumph?

The only end that can make sense of this human scene is the making of human personality ready for the Divine life. God is bringing sons to glory. For this end He is prepared to subordinate all lower ends. By their bearing upon such an end all the happenings of life have to be judged. Trials! In themselves they may be bitter and even hateful; but they are never to judged by themselves; they are part of a process whereby the mature sons of God are being made. And if the last great end is brought nearer by trials, then it is possible even to count it a joy to be in the thick of them.

'Perfect and entire'—the two words are not synonymous. 'Perfect' means here full-

[1] F. W. H. Myers, *Saint Paul.*

grown, mature in character and understanding, no longer children in attainment, but having all the characteristics and possessions of full-grown Christian men and women. 'Entire' means having all that should belong to us, soundness of our various faculties and powers: the man whom Peter healed at the steps of the Temple was made 'entire,' sound in every part and limb. God's aim for us is nothing less than this, that we should be full-grown in spiritual attainment and developed in all our faculties and parts, having everything that should belong to us. We speak of the importance of a many-sided education for our children; one part of it must not be developed at the expense of another; body and mind, and both in all their many-sided interests, require to be taken into account. God designs for us a many-sided training. He will so train us as to cultivate us all round. No part of our higher moral and spiritual nature will be neglected.

Are you wearied of long continued trouble, wearied waiting for God to come to your help, wearied for that dark shadow to be lifted off your home, off your own life, off the life of one dear to you? Remember it is God's way of bringing you to be perfect and entire, lacking in nothing. If we think what this means perhaps we shall understand better the length and the persistency of the discipline. How are you meeting hardness and troubles? What fruit have they produced in you? Have they made you stronger, purer, more Christ-like? Do you face them manfully in the strength of faith? Or do you sink before them into feebleness and despair? There is only one way of turning them to good account and making them subserve the end for which God has designed them: on the one hand to face them, not to flinch, to face them in the Master's strength, to endure as seeing Him who is invisible; and on the other to accept them as the Divine instruments of discipline to shape us to God's ideal. With infinite wisdom and love and patience, He lays His hand upon us here and there, He tests us in this way and that, in order that, full-grown and entire in every part, lacking in nothing that belongs to God's ideal of what we should be, not halt or maimed, but with a completed manhood and womanhood, we may enter into life.[1]

¶ In Thonon Madame Guyon met a poor woman, a laundress. 'This poor woman,' she says, 'was the mother of five children. But her poverty, and the cares of her family, were not the only source of trouble. She had a husband distempered both in mind and in body. He seemed to have nothing left mentally but his angry dispositions, and nothing left physically but just strength enough in his unparalyzed arm to beat his suffering wife. Yet this poor woman, now become, under God's grace, rich in faith, bore all with the meekness and patience of an angel. By her personal labours she supported both her five children and her husband. Her poverty was extreme; her suffering from other causes great; but amid her trials and distractions, she kept constantly recollected in God; and her tranquillity of spirit was unbroken. When she prayed, there was something wonderful in it.

In the same town were a shopkeeper, and a man whose business it was to make locks. Both became deeply religious; and, as was natural, they became intimate friends with each other. Learning the situation of the poor laundress, they agreed to visit her in turn, and to render her some assistance by reading to her. But they were suprised to learn that she was already instructed by the Lord Himself in all they read to her. God, they found, had taught her inwardly by the Holy Ghost, before He had sent, in His providence, the outward aid of books and pious friends to confirm His inward communications. So much was this the case, that they were willing to receive instruction from her. Her words seemed Divine.'[2]

Pain's furnace heat within me quivers;
God's breath upon the flame doth blow;
And all my heart in anguish shivers

[1] D. Fairweather, *Bound in the Spirit*, 230ff.
[2] T. C. Upham, *The Life of Madame Guyon*, 187.

And trembles at the fiery glow:
And yet I whisper, 'As God will,'
And in His hottest fire hold still.

He comes and lays my heart all heated
On the hard anvil, minded so
Into His own fair shape to beat it
With His great hammer, blow on blow:
And yet I whisper, 'As God will,'
And at His heaviest blows hold still.

He takes my softened heart and beats it,
The sparks fly off at every blow;
He turns it o'er and o'er and heats it,
And lets it cool and makes it glow;
And yet I whisper, 'As God will,'
And in His mighty hand hold still.

Why should I murmur? For the sorrow
Thus only longer lived would be;
Its end may come and will to-morrow,
When God has done His work in me:
So I say, trusting, 'As God will,'
And trusting to the end hold still.

He kindles for my profit purely
Affliction's glowing, fiery brand;
And all His heaviest blows are surely
Inflicted by a master hand:
So I say, praying, 'As God will,'
And hope in Him and suffer still.'[1]

Joy in Trouble.

Ja. i. 2.—'Count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations.'

What an attainment this sets before us! It seems far beyond our reach. To count it joy when we fall into trials! It is like telling us to make crowns out of poverty or stars out of midnight. We are not accustomed to associate joy and trouble. We think of joy rather as the friend of comfort, and bounty, and success, and victory. But here is joy rising out of the very midst of trouble. It is like a robin singing on a wintry morning, or a thrush singing in the wet and foggy twilight, a twilight swiftly darkening into an uncomfortable and clammy night. And yet this is the kind of association in which the Word of God delights. It loves to bring its music out of the most unlikely places.

1. We notice that James does not shirk the problem of trial. He is no shallow optimist, who ignores painful facts. He boldly admits that manifold temptations are to be expected in life. The word he uses shows how widely his eye has ranged over the field of human existence. He speaks of life as full of many and varying 'temptations'—a word which means more than mere afflictions and more than mere temptations to do wrong; in it he includes everything in life which befalling us demands the bracing up of our moral energy to endure or to resist. The word 'to tempt' has come to mean to endeavour to mislead a person and so to encompass his fall: it is generally now employed in an evil sense; but the word that James uses, and which it is difficult to translate by any other word than temptation, primarily means only to make trial of, to search into; it is nearer in thought to the word 'attempt,' which leaves the issue of the effect uncertain. Man is to be regarded first as untried; the divers temptations are the environing trials which come to put him to the proof. As there are evil men in the world, so there are temptations which are designed to bring about a man's fall: evil natures seek to lead men into evil: such are tempters in a bad sense. But the incidents and accidents, as we call them, of life are not arranged with any such evil intention; they are rather such things as are common to man, and they are but experiences which test man's moral quality.

As waves and storms serve to test the sea-going qualities of a ship, as rain and flood test the stability of a house (Matt. vii.), as the perils and stratagems of war test the soldier, so these temptations of life put men to the proof. We may succumb to them—tested we may be tempted; the ship may founder; the house may fall; the soldier may flee—but there is no sinister purpose in storm, or flood, or battle; there is no value in all; they work

[1] Julius Sturm.

experience; they test, and testing they set a stamp of approval upon all that endures; by revealing unsuspecting weakness they point out the way of improvement to him who fails.

¶ Madame Guyon puts it thus: 'God will give us opportunities to try our consecration, whether it be a true one or not. No man can be wholly the Lord's unless he is wholly consecrated to the Lord; and no man can know whether he is thus wholly consecrated, except by *tribulation*. That is the test. To rejoice in God's will, when that will imparts nothing but happiness, is easy even for the natural man. But none but the renovated man, none but the religious man, can rejoice in the Divine will, when it crosses his path, disappoints his expectations, and overwhelms him with sorrow. Trial, therefore, instead of being shunned, should be welcomed as the test,—and the only true test,—of a true state.

Beloved souls. There are consolations which pass away; but ye will not find true and abiding consolation except in entire abandonment, and in that love which loves the *cross*. He who does not welcome the cross does not welcome God.'[1]

¶ Writing concerning the severe cyclones which occasionally visit North Queensland, a traveller observes, 'Nature is rational even in her most passionate moments. Vegetation, rank and gross as in an unweeded garden, requires vigorous lopping. These storms comb out superfluous branches, cut out dead wood, destroy decayed shoots, and cleanse trunks and branches of parasitic growths. All is done boldly, yet with such skill that in a few weeks losses are hidden under masses of clean, healthy, bright foliage. The soil has received a luxurious top-dressing. Trees and plants respond to the stimulus with magical vigour, for lazy, slumbering forces have been roused into efforts so splendid that the realism of tropical vegetation is to be appreciated only after Nature has swept and sweetened her 'garden.' What a vivid parable of the blessing brought by the tempests which sweep the soul.[2]

[1] T. C. Upham, *The Life of Madame Guyan*, 239.
[2] W. L. Watkinson, *The Gates of Dawn*, 366.

2. We begin now to catch the writer's sturdy philosophy of life as we reflect upon his words. 'Count it all joy.' That is just what we do not think of doing. It is natural and easy to dwell upon the pain, the worry, the inconvenience, the irritation of the many trials of life. They are not fixed and constant; we cannot prepare ourselves against them as men who know that they can be assailed only from one quarter; trials come from all sides; they spring up in unexpected places and in unforeseen ways. Thus repeatedly assailed, it is no wonder that men should be in heaviness, or 'put to grief in manifold temptations' (1 Pet. i. 6). It is easy to dwell upon the variety, and fatiguing incessancy of life's troubles. Men have spent their eloquence in describing them. 'Man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upwards.' Sorrow, predestined sorrow, waits him at every turn.

> Before the beginning of years,
> There came to the making of man
> Life with a gift of tears,
> Time with a glass that ran.

Like Hamlet, everyone has felt at times 'the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune.' So clear and widespread is the fact, and so easy is it to enlarge upon the fact that we weary of the commonplace reiteration of complaints. But here we reflect that it is cowardly to spend time in lamenting the inevitable. Wisdom bids us ask how the ills of life should be met. What spirit is most consonant with manhood, when confronted with acknowledged and inevitable ills?

It is in its answer to this question that Christianity rises so high. Stoicism could counsel a proud equanimity, and at times achieved a sort of noble disdain. Buddhism sought to get rid of the cause of suffering by stifling some of the best emotions of the human heart. Both sought to reach an unruffled calm, bred of an indifference which was either pride or lack of feeling. Christianity meets the problem by calling forth a triumphant spirit based on invincible confidence. No faith struck with so firm a hand the note of

joy in the midst of trouble. 'We glory in tribulation,' said Paul (Rom. v. 3). 'Count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations,' writes James. Do not both disciples lead our thoughts back to their Master? Christ had never concealed from His disciples the truth that tribulation awaited them. 'In the world ye have tribulation'; but He gave them the right to confidence. The world, which teemed with tribulation, was a world despoiled of all power to harm. It was a vanquished world. 'Ye have tribulation; but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.'

¶ His growing blindness distressed all those who loved him. Old age had descended upon him suddenly. Not only were his eyes darkened, but he suffered from constant sickness and frequent spitting of blood. Every physical organ was impaired, and he was always in pain. Fasts and austerities and poignant sorrow had accomplished this collapse.

Cardinal Ugolino was anxious that Francis should come to Rieti to have his eyes examined. He wrote an affectionate letter to this effect, and Brother Elias seconding his appeal, Francis was with much difficulty persuaded to accept his invitation.

His own forebodings were of death, for few could hope to survive the surgical butcheries of that age. He decided to pay Sister Clare a farewell visit before going to Rieti. It was near the end of July when he arrived at San Damiano. A few hours afterwards he was seized with such acute pain that his departure was delayed. Clare and the sisters nursed him during the fortnight of his illness. He was now quite blind, but desired more solitude and greater freedom than were possible within the walls of San Damiano. Clare with her own hands built a large hut of reeds and rushes in her garden, to which he was removed, and where, in spite of an invasion of rats and mice by day and night, which let him neither eat nor sleep in peace, he recovered the serenity of mind and the joyousness of spirit which had so energised the first ten years of his apostolate. For in the midst of trials, which the childish mind of that age attributed to diabolic annoyance, he was comforted once again by the voice of his Master, who bade him rejoice greatly in his tribulations and infirmities and heed nothing but the priceless treasure which God had given him in reward of them, as if already he had entered into His Kingdom.

His soul was filled with rapture and overflowed in praise, and the sisters often heard his voice lifted up in new songs while he walked under the olive-trees. The vision within was rendered to him a thousand-fold for the shadow fallen on his eyes.[1]

3. What we ought to realize here is the fundamental view of life which these disciples of Christ took. They were living in a world that did not belong to the powers of evil; whatever strength evil had was a broken strength; the force of evil, however great in appearance, was inherently weak. Believing this, James could say, 'Count it all joy.' He employs the part of the verb which implies that we are to keep on continually reckoning, as faith can reckon, that there is in trial an inherent reason for joy; tribulation is fraught with possibilities which make for keener joy. Note, he does not say that trial is in itself joy; he does not deny that trial is troublesome, but he says that we may and ought to reckon it as bringing seasons and opportunities of gladness. There is labour, fatigue, and not infrequently pain, in sustained effort, in the strained muscle and in the labouring breath, but there is also a joy in contending; a thrill of gladness which springs from even enforced exertion. Realize the moral victory and the spiritual strength which may come to one who, conquering circumstances, gains mastery over self, and we shall see the reasons for joy which accompany the presence of manifold temptations. Realize, further, the love which the servant of Christ bears to his Master, and we shall know the secret joy which is theirs, to whom it is given 'not only to believe on him, but also to suffer in his behalf.'

¶ It seemed to me the other day, as I stood

[1] A. M. Stoddart, *Francis of Assisi*, 184.

in a country lane, that I was face to face with the visible parable of Christianity as expounded by James and Paul. For I was almost dazzled by the beauty of the flowering thorn. This bush that a week or two back was just a black mass of spikes and thorns was now the gayest of the gay. The thorn-trees had blossomed out in magnificent profusion of bloom, white and pink in turn, and the whole countryside was bright with their beauty, and sweet with their fragrance. According to the teaching of James, the sorrow and miseries of life may be to a Christian like the flowering thorn. The thorns, indeed, are still there, and capable of inflicting pain; but in the glory of bloom and sweetness they flood the soul with bliss. The hour comes when you see them not hard, naked, cruel—that is the one-sided, short-sighted, imperfect view. You see them fully revealed; their hidden virtue brought to light and life in all the splendour of leaf and blossom and scent. According to the teaching of James, the thorns of life are of this kind—painful, and trying, but with a secret magic of virtue that surprises us one day by a full revelation of sweetness and beauty.[1]

¶ In the first volume of Morley's *Life of Gladstone*,[2] there is a letter which Mr. Gladstone wrote at the age of twenty-three. 'In future,' he wrote, 'I hope circumstances will bind me down to work with a rigour which my natural sluggishness will find it impossible to elude. . . . Periods like these [through which he had been passing] grievous generally in many of their results, are by no means unfavourable to the due growth and progress of individual character. I remember a very wise saying of Archidamus in Thucydides, that the being educated *en tois anagkaiotatois* brings strength and efficacy to the character.' The passage to which he refers is where Archidamus says: 'We should remember that man differs little from man except that he turns out best who is trained in the sharpest school.'

[1] C. S. Horne, *The Soul's Awakening*, 86.
[2] P. 97.

The Testing of Faith.

Ja. i. 3.—'The trying (RV 'proof') of your faith worketh patience.'

The trials or temptations indicated by James are of a special kind. They are *trials that test our faith:* they are trials that put our souls to the proof. There are many trials that test us intellectually and physically. There are trials that demand courage and endurance. There are trials that pierce us with many sorrows. But it may well be that none of these is of the special order described by the Apostle James. They do not attack us where we are most of all sensitive, and where a wound inflicts the sharpest agony. They leave our *faith* untroubled. Even supposing that they involve a loss of confidence in trusted friends; even if they lay in ruins the honour and credit of some whom we have respected and loved; they do not suggest to us that God is not in His Heaven, that His Word does not stand, nor His love and His honour remain the foundation of His universe. But there *are* trials of a fiercer sort, and James maintains that even in that fiery furnace we can walk unscathed and enter into the companionship of 'One like unto the Son of Man,' and 'find a nobler faith our own.'

1. We are to welcome the proof and trial of faith, because *it proves that we have faith.* The pain of these temptations to unbelief is exactly proportioned to the reality and power of our belief. Sometimes it is necessary to prove our faith to ourselves. It is by some shock to it that we realize how dear it is to us. It is an old saying that we do not value our health until we begin to lose it. One day we experience a shock of fear and disquietude owing to some symptom in which we recognize a menace to our physical health. Then we begin to reflect what a blessing health has been, and the value of it is fully perceived for the first time. We may have read some clever book written to prove that Jesus was no more than a beautiful myth, and we experienced a

shock of intolerable agony. Take out of the world that Divine and radiant Figure, and what a dark, sordid, gloomy world this of ours becomes! Its sun is set. Tens of thousands have discovered by this trial of faith how much their own hearts and hopes were bound up with this gospel of Jesus Christ. Try to inflict pain on a man's paralysed limb, and you trouble him not a whit. He is all unconscious that you are trying to hurt or wound him. Use the same method on a healthy limb, and the acuteness of the pain is the tribute to the vigour of its life. It is exactly so here. To feel pain, and be assured thereby of health and life, is something to be counted joy. We do not envy the man who never suffers pain through the trial of his faith. Speak tenderly of a distressed faith, but fearfully of a faith that has never been distressed. It only means paralysis of the faculty of faith. It means that creeping indifference has deprived one of susceptibility. It means that one is only partially a live soul.

¶ 'Ah'! says someone, 'if Jesus Christ were not beyond me I think I could believe, but He transcends my experience; He is too wonderful for me. He tells me what may be true, but it is beyond my mind and thought and conscience to know that it is true.' Well, let me give you an illustration. The other day, when in Lancashire, I picked up a copy of *The Manchester Guardian*, and read in that paper . . . an account of a scientific lecture by a brilliant American scientist in the institute at Manchester which corresponds, I understand, to the Royal Institution in London. I do not pretend to follow the lecture in all its technicalities, but the main achievement of the lecturer was to prove that the ordinary atmosphere is full of waves of sound so delicate that they are inaudible to the ordinary ear, and they can be made audible only by a certain instrument which is his invention, which was set going during the proceedings, and reproduced the sounds that ordinarily are as inaudible music in the atmosphere by which we are surrounded—very much the same in that sphere as the photographic camera in the world of light. What was it that the scientific lecturer in Manchester really did? What we call to-day a revelation. He brought into the consciousness of his audience certain musical sounds that to the ordinary unassisted mind would be inaudible. Now, will you let me say this! My thought of Jesus Christ is this: that He gathered up into His Person, that He might reproduce it for all mankind, all the inaudible music of the spiritual universe. And all that our unassisted hearts and minds would never have heard of the love of God and never seen of the beauty of the Divine face has been made audible and visible to us for ever through the Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the Apostle said, 'He brought life and immortality to light.' Yea, the unseen universe was made visible, audible, real in Him.[1]

2. Faith is the apprehension of God. But everybody knows that that apprehension can be exceedingly weak and uncertain. It has been compared to a hand by which we lay hold of things unseen. But the hand can be limp and nervous, with only small ability to grasp the things unseen. And so the hand has to be disciplined, and disciplined in two directions. First, it is to be strengthened in its grip until the soul has such power as to be able to say with the patriarch, 'I will not let thee go.' And, secondly, it is to be refined in its touch so as to have an exquisite discernment of the presence of God. Some men's feeling of God is exceedingly numb and coarse and undiscerning. Others have a most delicate sense of His presence, and can feel Him in the night. Well, it is appointed of God that our darker experiences should thus play the part of kindly ministers, giving strength and refinement to our faith, and so enabling us to get into a firmer, clearer intimacy with our Lord.

And here is the second step. *The disciplined faith is to produce patience.* 'The trial of your faith worketh patience.' The disciplined faith produces patience as a rich and fertile soil produces flowers. Once we have faith patience will appear. Graces never exist alone.

[1] C. Silvester Horne.

One encourages and promotes another. If we get the spirit of hope our courage is invigorated. If we obtain the grace of mercy it strengthens our hope. And the same gracious consequences are recorded in our text. Trials discipline faith, and then faith produces patience. And surely that is a very reasonable sequence. A finer apprehension of God is bound to produce a more masculine fortitude. No man can be so patient as the man whose hand has a strong and confident hold upon the Lord.

¶ The patience of the New Testament is no negative virtue. It is not the synonym of mere unintelligent obstinacy, or, to use Edmund Burke's phrase, 'perseverance in the wisdom of prejudice.' Patience is a very active virtue. It is patience that endures as seeing Him that is invisible. Patience is the fruit of the testing of faith. When any man has known what it means for the fashion of his belief to suffer change, for the wine of the spirit, to use the striking figure of Hosea, to be emptied from vessel to vessel, and in the process to be clarified and purified; when a man has once experienced that loss of form may mean gain of reality and power, and that after a period of mental agony he

> may come at last,
> To find a nobler faith his own,

the result is above all in patience, courage, quiet confidence and endurance.[1]

Patience at Work.

Ja. i. 4.—'Let patience have her perfect work.'

When faith is tested, and the test is successful, then says James the result is patience. But 'patience' is not now the best translation of his Greek word. It is too passive. The word James uses has in it an active element. 'Endurance' is better. The testing of our faith works endurance, produces as its chief result endurance, and endurance must carry its work to a finish. If we keep the word 'patience' we must understand it in that sense.

Now there is no thought more frequently repeated, insisted upon with more urgency, throughout the whole of the New Testament than this—that the great need of the disciple who has begun to walk in the ways of Christ is patience in the sense of endurance. 'In your patience ye shall win your souls' (Luke xxi. 19), said the Lord Himself when He spoke to His first and nearest disciples of the tribulations that were coming upon the earth. It was upon those who should bring forth fruit with patience (Luke viii. 15) that His blessing was to rest. Paul and James, however in other respects their thoughts may have run in different channels, thought and spoke alike in this. The tribulation through which they passed wrought patience (Rom. v. 3); it was only through the patience that comes of the comfort of God's Holy Spirit that they could hope (Rom. xv. 4). The ministry of God's servants, so Paul himself had learnt, was above all things a ministry of patience (2 Cor. vi. 4); it was in his patience that his own son in the faith had come to recognize the Divine source of his mission (2 Tim. iii. 10). It was the lesson he gave to old men, who so readily fall aweary of well-doing, that they 'be sound' in patience (Titus ii. 2) as well as in faith. As for James, the whole lesson of his Epistle might be summed up in the word, because the works, upon the need of which he so trenchantly insists, can be wrought only by patience.

¶ Patience is indispensable in the architecture of character. If we were to give it a place in the work of character-building, we might call it the clerk of the works; but speaking of the ladder of Christian virtues which rises from earth to heaven, we call patience the stage or platform whence we may ascend towards higher things. Without patience no achievement is possible; with it, none need be despaired of. Can one say less who remembers Our Master's words: 'In your patience ye shall win your souls'?[1]

[1] C. S. Horne, *The Soul's Awakening*, 92.

[1] W. B. Carpenter, *The Wisdom of James the Just*, 94.

The very language of the text puts aside the common notion that patience is a passive grace. The 'patience' of the text does 'work.' It is an active thing, whether that work be the virtue that it produces, or, as is more probable, its own preservation in unbroken activity. The mere bearing of trouble by no means covers the whole ground of this royal and supreme virtue to which the text is here exhorting us. It is perseverance in the teeth of the wind, and not merely keeping our place in spite of it, that James exhorts us to here. The ship that lies at anchor, with a strong cable and a firm grip of the flukes in a good holding-ground, and rides out any storm without stirring one fathom's length from its place, exhibits one form of this perseverance that is patience. The ship with sails wisely set, and a firm hand at the tiller, and a keen eye on the compass, that uses the utmost blast to bear it nearer its desired haven, and never yaws one hairbreadth from the course that is marked out for it, exhibits the other and the higher form. And that is the kind of thing that the Apostle is here recommending to us—not merely passive endurance, but a brave, active perseverance, in spite of antagonisms, in the course that conscience, illuminated by God, has bidden us to run.

Strive; yet I do not promise
  The prize you dream of to-day
Will not fade when you think to grasp it,
  And melt in your hand away;
But another and holier treasure,
  You would now perchance disdain,
Will come when your toil is over,
  And pay you for all your pain.

Wait; yet I do not tell you
  The hour you long for now
Will not come with its radiance vanished,
  And a shadow upon its brow;
Yet far through the misty future,
  With a crown of starry light,
An hour of joy you know not
  Is winging her silent flight.[1]

[1] Adelaide Anne Procter.

Patience.

Ja. i. 4.—'Let patience have her perfect work.'

This homely virtue of patience becomes a kind of password in the New Testament. And when we consider, we can see how there was peculiar need for such a virtue in the primitive Church. Christ's earliest disciples had not the sanction of long Christian centuries behind them, as we have. In a sense they were explorers and discoverers; they were framing the spiritual alphabet by means of which we learn to read. They were making a supreme experiment; and in all experiments men have need of patience, lest they lose heart too soon. Then again, the first believers had not only much to discover which we inherit, but much also to endure which we escape. That was a time when all who would live godly in Christ Jesus must suffer persecution and resist even unto blood, striving against sin. Assuredly those confessors of the creed of martyrdom had need of patience. Moreover, the early Christians were penetrated and possessed with one unspeakable expectation. They endured in hope of their Lord's return. They trusted that they should not taste of death until they had seen His Kingdom come with power. Wistfully and patiently they watched in the face of His delay. 'O tarry thou the Lord's leisure' was the apostolic message, as year after year slipped by and the Advent hope burned dim. 'Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him. . . . Fret not thyself in any wise. . . .' The ancient Psalm must have come home to them with vivid and pathetic power.

The same exhortation applies to us twentieth-century Christians, on whom the ends of the age are come. In these last days men grow more than ever restless for change, and fitful in temper, and hasty in experiment, and hungry for quick returns. Even in the Church have not the strength and glory somehow faded out of our Christian ideal of patience? Englishmen naturally admire dog-

gedness and tenacity of temper. They boast that they never know when they are beaten. But they commonly think of patience as a passive quality, suitable for women and for invalids. They recall patient Enid and patient Griselda; but in their hearts they hardly rank this virtue among the highest attributes of manhood.

Our wisest English teachers warn us against such a mistake. John Bunyan understood better; in his Interpreter's House, Patience appears as the deep, steady, self-controlled character, in contrast with shallow, sensual Passion which grasps the present and misses the future. In Spenser's *Faerie Queene* we find Patience figured as a manly virtue, and placed as physician in the House of Holiness, to typify the healing power of long-suffering love. On the other hand, Spenser depicts Impatience as one of the hags who attend the evil spirit of Passion, Impotence being the other. And in practical life do we not find that impatience and impotence go hand in hand? The wilful, hasty spirit always leads on to weakness and failure. Whereas nothing on earth is so invincible as patience—the 'equal temper of heroic hearts, to strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.'

Patience is really the test and token of inward strength. St. Paul prays for his friends at Colossae that they may be strengthened with power according to the might of God's glory—*unto all patience*. Only a soul thus strengthened can toil on, undaunted and serene in the teeth of trial and disappointment. For apart from patience, faith herself does not inherit the promises. The victory which overcometh the world is won by invincible, irresistible patience. We learn in the end that we can best 'conquer pain by suffering, and want by wanting, and loss by losing, and failure by failing, and death itself by dying.'

Amid the manifold discouragements and disappointments involved in all genuine Christian service, one chief secret of endurance lies in considering Him who endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest we grow weary and faint in our minds. To be misunderstood and misrepresented and maligned; to be hindered and thwarted by the very people you are most anxious to befriend; to be deceived by those you trust and betrayed by those you love—these are experiences which no faithful Christian worker can altogether escape. Nay, sometimes the contradiction of sinners seems less harassing than the contradiction of saints—the criticism and contempt which you meet with at the hands of religious people because you follow not with them. The servants of Jesus Christ need a double share of His own patience, that they may overcome this evil with good.

'The signs of an apostle were wrought among you,' says St. Paul, 'in all patience, by signs and wonders and mighty works.' And here is the mightiest work, and the greatest wonder of all. To make the best possible of each one of our fellow-workers, to put up with the froward, to make allowance for the foolish, to submit to having our judgment overruled, not even to claim our own rights or to assert our own position, to endure all things from all men even when they try our patience most—here is one great unexplored secret of Christian success.[1]

¶ Of Miss Nightingale's demeanour during her short holiday at home in August 1856, there is a pleasant account in a letter from her sister: I cannot conceive anything more beautiful than her frame of mind. It is so calm, so cheerful, so simple. The physical hardships one does not wonder at her forgetting to speak of; but the marvel to me is how the mental ones,—the indifference, the ignorance, the cruelty, the falsehood she has had to encounter—never seem to ruffle her for an instant (and never have done, Aunt Mai says). It is as if she dwelt in another atmosphere of peace and trust in Him which nothing wicked can dim. She speaks of these things sadly and quietly as some one from another world might do, seeing so plainly the excuses for the wrong-doers, while the personal part never seems to come in, and there is

[1] T. H. Darlow, *At Home in the Bible*, 52ff.

such a charm about her perfect simplicity. There is not the smallest particle of martyr about her.[1]

A Gracious Giver.

Ja. i. 5.—'If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not.'

We are often oppressed and perplexed by our want of wisdom. Wisdom is more than knowledge. It is the faculty of using our knowledge—applying the facts and principles that we possess to the varied cases that we have to settle from day to day. It is said, and truly, that we pass through three periods in our intellectual growth. There is an early period when we think we know everything; a succeeding period in which we seem to know nothing; a final period in which, through much sorrow and disappointment, we have won sufficient knowledge to understand something of ourselves and our environment. But as we are called upon to meet the inevitable trials of life, with their claims for prompt action and satisfactory decision, we are often terrified at our want of wisdom—our lack of the faculty to use our knowledge right.

Let us bear in mind then to whom it is that we may safely and successfully apply for what we want. 'If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God.' There is the true source. We may apply to God because He is Omniscient, knowing all things—because He is Omnipotent, governing all things—because He is Omnipresent, close at hand wherever we are. He is, indeed, ever at home and never beyond our reach. But it is chiefly because He is a righteous, Fatherly God that we should approach Him with this plea and purpose. 'I am poor and needy,' wrote the Psalmist, 'yet the Lord thinketh upon me.' 'I know that thou hearest me always,' was the declaration of Christ. And it is to this source of help that we in our turn must go for our wisdom. For He 'giveth liberally, and upbraideth not.'

[1] Sir Edward Cook, *The Life of Florence Nightingale*, i. 319.

The word translated 'liberally' means literally 'simply, without any underlying thought of what is to be gained in return.' That is the way in which God gives. People have sometimes objected to the doctrine of which the Scripture is full from beginning to end, that God is His own motive, and that His reason in all His acts is His own glory, that it teaches a kind of Almighty and Divine selfishness. But it is perfectly consistent with this thought of James, that He gives simply for the benefit of the recipient, and without a thought of what may accrue to the bestower. For why does God desire His glory to be advanced in the world? Can it mean any good to Him that you and I should praise Him? Yes! good to Him in so far as love delights to be recognized. But, beyond that, none. The reason why He seeks that men should know and recognize His glory, and should praise and magnify it, is because it is their life and their blessedness to do so. He desires that all men should know Him for what He is, because to do so is to come to be what we ought to be, and what He has made us try to be; and therein to enjoy Him for ever. So 'liberally,' 'simply,' for the sake of the poor men that He pours Himself upon, He gives.

¶ 'Liberally' would be the best translation, if we could preserve exclusively its proper ethical sense; but by 'liberally' we now usually mean 'abundantly,' and that is not the particular aspect of God's bounty indicated here by the following words, whatever may be the case in the passages of Paul. On the whole *graciously* coupled as it is with *giveth*, seems the nearest equivalent.[1]

1. First then, 'He giveth liberally.' This, according to the Apostle, who knew his Lord's mind, this is the character, the way, the habit, of the heavenly Giver. He is great, and rich, and mighty. He has large gifts to give, if He will. But will He? Is it His liking to bestow? Perhaps we shall have to expend much power in asking, and then the infinite Will may consent to a very small movement in

[1] F. J. A. Hort, *The Epistle of St. James*, 9.

response, graduated to the minute scale of our character and position. That might be so, but it is not. 'He giveth liberally.'

Let us take that fact with us, in a conscious grasp, to the very foot of the throne of grace. We remember there, with reverent wonder, all the provision made in Christ for our access and acceptance. We adore the grace which has sprinkled the way with the blood of Calvary, and has established the High Priest over the house of God. But having remembered this, let us clasp anew this perfectly simple assurance. 'He giveth liberally.' Not only is our access and welcome secured to some sort of mercy, to some possibility of blessing, we are ushered in by our Mediator to the presence of Him who is delighted to give. 'He giveth liberally.'

> Thou art coming to a King:
> Large petitions with thee bring;
> For His grace and power are such
> None can ever ask too much.

2. Secondly, 'He upbraideth not.' This is a sort of development of the first statement; it is in a sense included in it. Yet it has a perfectly special import and value of its own. It tells us some things about the character of God which are inestimable.

We all know, in human intercourse, that it is possible for a gift to be given, or a service done, which may be in itself large, beautiful, momentous, while yet the glory and the joy is sadly taken from it in the sequel by some sort of 'upbraiding' on the giver's part. He has given, he has served. But he somehow makes us feel that he is keenly conscious of the claims set up by the action, and that he is not at all satisfied with the way in which we have met or used it; and so it becomes to us far more of a debt than a possession. The donor is to us rather a creditor and a critic than anything else.

The gifts of God do, in deepest reality, set up incalculable claims upon us; yet those claims are so presented to us in His Word as not for a moment to obscure the brightness of this utterance, 'He upbraideth not.' For the payment He asks is the payment of love. And that request can be made only by a Love which itself delights to go out freely to its object. His gifts might, if He pleased, be set before us in the aspect of so much gratuity calling for so much obedience. As a fact, they are set before us as the expression of His own yearning loving-kindness, which asks us, not for a 'tale of bricks,' but, for heart answering heart, for our love and all it contains in reply.

¶ The Roman historian, Tacitus, noted long ago that it is a characteristic of the basest and meanest natures 'to hate the man whom they have hurt.' It is the blessed characteristic of the Supreme Nature, our God and Father in Christ Jesus, to love the being whom He has blest. Poor the use, at best, that we have made of His precious gifts. But He has given them to us sinners. And He loves His beneficiaries, as such, with a persistent love. 'He upbraideth not.'[1]

¶ Many a time I spoil my giving, because I cannot resist the opportunity of upbraiding. I aid the suppliant who beseeches my friendly intervention, and I tell him his faults and shortcomings. But there is not a trace of such censoriousness in God. He mingles no acids with His honeycomb. He might bring a hundred grievous charges against me, and each of them a true charge. But He is too eager for my temporal and spiritual wealth to mar the welcome gift with the harsh word. He blesses me in the gentlest way.[2]

¶ Too often charity is dispensed in the spirit of censoriousness. A certain poor woman was the recipient of a weekly dole which was handed to her by a visitor whose manner and remarks were of the interfering and unkind order. Said the poor woman tearfully to a sympathetic friend, 'I hate taking the money from Miss D——. She makes it so difficult. I'd sooner see the wolf at the door than her.'

¶ The following story of Dr. Parker, which recently appeared in *The British Weekly*, is a sample of the gracious spirit in which a gift should be given. He was anxious to help

[1] H. C. G. Moule, *Thoughts for the Sundays of the Year*, 51.
[2] A. Smellie, *In the Secret Place*, 230.

financially an aged Congregational minister who had suffered loss through the 'Liberator' fraud, and at last discovered this charming way of proffering the gift. Learning that on a certain day the veteran minister attained the fiftieth anniversary of entering the ministry, Dr. Parker sent him a bouquet of fifty crimson roses, and in the heart of each flower he placed a new sovereign. The writer adds, 'I had the story from the recipient himself, who related it with tears in his eyes.'

The Waverer.

Ja. i. 6.—'He that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed.'

This chapter is one of the most extraordinary instances in literature of the use of analogy, figures of speech, and accurate observation. It heaps one illustration on another and leaps from one picture to another, as though all Nature and life were created to enrich language and teach lessons. Here are some of its hastily passing pictures, all occurring in twenty-seven verses: the surging sea, the scorching wind, the flower in the grass, the process of birth, the passing shadow, the grafted branch, the glance in the mirror, the untamed tongue. What a gift is here of what Kant called in Goethe '*Augenbegabung*,' the ability to use one's eyes!

Consider, for instance, the single contrast between the wave and the ship. The wave is of the real ocean, salty and boisterous, 'driven with the wind and tossed.' You see the wave heaving up, and the wind catching it and toppling it over in a white-cap, and the spray blowing the top of it off with a gust; and then you see the wave sinking back into the undistinguishable level, and where there was a wave there is only a hollow in the sea. Such, says James, is the unstable man. You see him for the moment tossed up by the wind of circumstance, and then you look again, and where there was a man there is only a cavity. You do not know where to find him; your eye cannot rest on him. Then a few verses farther on is a picture of the purposes of God: they are unwavering and steady, without 'variation, neither shadow that is cast by turning.' They are like a ship steadily steered over the waves. Sometimes on a large steamship, with no land in sight, the first sign that the course is changed is the shadow creeping across the deck; it is the 'shadow that is cast by turning.'

How familiar in the world is this contrast of the wave and the ship: the wave flashing up, conspicuous, boisterous, aggressive, and the ship going her unchanging way with a steady helm! A man begins his life with the utmost promise, and you look back upon his career some day and ask why that man has accomplished so little in the world. The answer is: he was unstable, he lacked persistency, steadiness, single-mindedness. There was charm, leap, flash, like a wave tossed by the wind, but his life soon sank into the undistinguishable level of the world. And why, on the other hand, has that quiet man done great things? He knew his course and held his rudder true. There was no shadow cast by turning. The wave showed how the breeze of the day was blowing; the ship showed by its course its destined port. One was blown; the other was steered. The wave may leap up against the ship as if to overwhelm it, but through many a hindrance and obstacle the ship goes, slowly perhaps, yet without variation, on its way, with the unswerving movement of the life of God.

1. How do we like the waverer? How does the world like him? How does the politician like him in politics, or the business man in business? What sort of spectacle has he cut in history? Are not King John, Charles I., Louis XVI., the scarecrows of history? Has not the waverer been the target of the satirist and the butt of the lampoonist in all ages? Have not unstable Reuben, double-minded Balaam, and wavering Pilate become household proverbs among us? St. James was a tolerant, charitable, tender-hearted man, but he has no tenderness for the vacillator. He had been a waverer himself, and 'those who live in glass houses should not throw stones'

—but he throws them. The text is not pitiful, it is scornful; it is almost contemptuous. He talks as though wavering were a vice and not an infirmity. Let us come back to ourselves. How do we feel towards the man who cannot make up his mind? Pity him?—yes, but is it ever pure pity? Is there not generally something of contempt mixed with it? Why is this? If it is infirmity, misfortune, idiosyncrasy, we should be sorry; and if we are quite sure, we are so. But in most cases we are scornful, even indignant. Why? Because at bottom we have a feeling that the man could help it if he would. We feel it is something unnecessary, avoidable, and therefore culpable; it is not misfortune—it is offence.

¶ In Amiel we have an example of a man who sees so many things at once, who is so many-poised, that he cannot bring himself to act decisively on any plain issue in life. His instinct, which, of course, would have urged him to act, was balanced in his case by a sleepless critical faculty—the Mephistopheles of Faust—which persuaded him that there were always reasons on the other side for not acting, or for acting differently. In him instinct and knowledge cancelled one another, so that he simply stood still. As he became aware that this was his condition, as every failure to act confirmed his habit of not acting, his moral hesitancy became morbid and fixed. He is a Hamlet of these latter days, one in whom 'the native hue of resolution is sicklied o'er with the pale caste of thought.' Amiel is a classical instance of the man in whom culture or knowledge has weakened certain elementary powers, faiths, instincts, in the absence of which, nevertheless, a man ceases to be himself. He will not commit himself in any particular case—he sees so much on the other side and on all sides. He will not apply himself to one thing—there are in this world so many things. Now, if in any urgent matter, either of duty or of faith, a man refuses to *act*, to make a personal choice, simply because there are so many facts and circumstances in the world, which if he only knew them all might lead him to act differently, or refrain from acting altogether, that man is going against the ordinary practice of life in every region. If he were to adopt such a principle consistently, he would do nothing at all, indeed he would become a maniac.[1]

2. Now, just as we all get impatient with the mere waverer and suspect him of insincerity, so God and His Church insist that failure to believe is often not pitiable weakness but serious moral fault. A grave position to take up? It is taken reluctantly, but deliberately; some of us have had to fight our way to it through the fiercest conflicts of our intellectual life. There is no consistency in religion, no harmony in Scripture, no logic in the Christian scheme of life, except on the assumption that all disbelief that is not intellectual, and therefore temporary, has in it the element of culpability; that unbelief is not infirmity, nor misfortune, but *sin*. Is it objected that this is 'much ado about nothing,' that the waverer is not a common person among us? It would be well if it were so, but the fact is the intellectual waverer is not often purely intellectual in his doubtings. Any honest man who will examine himself will find that his many-mindedness has a deeper origin, that in fact his mental difficulties are but the excuses to himself for symptoms far more serious. Intellectual waverers may not be very numerous, and the same may be said of those who hesitate from constitutional infirmities. All the same, we are not discussing some curious, uncommon form of spiritual disorder which affects a small minority, but one that in one form or other is frightfully common, is in fact radical and affects us all. The great psychological scourge of humanity is double-mindedness. As garrulous old Montaigne says: 'We are all framed of flaps and patches, and of so shapeless and diverse a co-mixture that every piece and every moment playeth his part and there is as much difference between us and our-

[1] J. A. Hutton, *Pilgrims in the Region of Faith*, 46.

selves as there is between ourselves and others.'

3. The wavering condemned by James is not the uncertainty induced by the insufficiency or contradictoriness of evidence, or by suspense of judgment on its way to a permanent conclusion; not indecision produced by a growing brain or a widening knowledge—these, when they are honest, never lead men far wrong. It is the wavering that springs from a divided nature, it is self-inflicted injury done to the spiritual organ, the helplessness which throughout all Nature is the penalty of neglected faculty. In the spiritual realm God and the reign of righteousness are certainties as clear as the sun in the heavens; and before a soul can have reached the condition described in the text it must have done violence to its own nature and seriously damaged its own highest powers. There is no condemnation in the text for the honest struggler with doubt. The man who, holding to God and right, is fighting his way through fog and mystery, is a delight and a fascination to heaven itself. The text is simply James's way of showing that what we call the doctrine of the Fall is not a theory of theologians, but an awful fact stamped deep on the human constitution, blocking our upward path and frustrating all our higher ambitions. We are to trust our own trusts, follow implicitly our own higher instincts, accept and rest on the promptings of the Spirit of God and our own souls. That is faith, that is the cure of many-mindedness, and there is no other.

¶ To keep close to Amiel, we see in him how the question comes to present itself. He fails to attain to certitude, to a happy and habitual confidence in God and in life's meaning, because the evidence is not quite convincing. Now the evidence for God can never in a sense be convincing; that is to say, it can never be so indisputable as practically to coerce and overwhelm the human reason. Were that to take place, it would not be faith that ensued. Further, Amiel, as we have seen, will not take the only course which, as I think, so far confirms such faith as a man has: he will not proceed upon it. He failed, and could not but fail, because of those two conditions by which he bound himself. He would not believe once for all, because he was afraid that later knowledge might change his attitude; and for the same reason he would not act strongly upon such incipient faith as from time to time offered itself to him.

The very nature of faith in God, at least so it seems to me, demands that we act upon it on evidence short of absolute proof. Faith is most truly faith when it knows nothing but its own inspirations. Not that faith is entirely without evidence or without very sound evidence; but simply because faith is always a personal act, it will always be possible for the individual to take the other alternative. One thing also, I think, may be claimed. There is a sense in which, to quote the language of remote days, man is the measure of the universe. What I mean just now by that is, that the world, the universe, life, has a wonderful way of corroborating that view of it which for your own reasons you are taking. Set out with the idea, with the faith, that life is from the moral point of view utterly careless, that 'as it happeneth to the wise man, so it happeneth to the fool,'—and the world, or your experience, will support that idea to some length; but only to some length, and that not very far. Take, however, a deeper, a holier view of things. Settle with yourself that life is not given us for self-pleasing, but for self-restraint, for the practice and fulfilment of certain purer calls, and once more, now that your ear is trained to finer sounds, you will catch the approval of things, the 'Well done' of some mysterious and authoritative voice. You will feel that there is something in this world which appeals to you in a dumb, speechless way, to take the high road, the narrow road, through this world of ours. And even if you have no other foundation for the life of faith; *that* will serve, and if you are faithful to it, will, at the challenge of further things, become for you more and more.[1]

[1] J. A. Hutton, *Pilgrims in the Region of Faith*, 51.

Double-Mindedness.

Ja. i. 8.—'A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways.'

THERE is something vivid and direct in the style of James's Epistle, which serves to render effective the appeal which it was his especial object to make to those who had nominally accepted Christianity, not to disgrace their Christian profession by falling away from its spirit and refusing to carry out its precepts. The comparison of the man who is a hearer of the Word and not a doer with one who beholdeth his natural face in a glass, and then goeth away and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was; the description of the well-dressed and wealthy congregation looking askance with undisguised contempt at their poorer brother; the emphatic condemnation of the evils wrought by an unbridled tongue,—these and other passages stamp themselves easily on our memory, and make the Epistle perhaps somewhat uncomfortable reading for those who prefer to have the practical as well as the doctrinal side of Christianity left in a state of hazy and undefined impression.

There is definiteness enough in this phrase 'a double-minded man.' The word which the Apostle uses is a very striking and a very unusual one. There is no illustration of its use before James, and, except in this passage and in iv. 8, it finds no place in the New Testament. Not unlikely the Apostle coined the word for his own purpose. It means literally the 'two-souled,' and it describes not the fraudulent, the deceitful man, him whom we term the double-dealer—not that, but the wavering, the irresolute man with no definite principle, no right vocation, who is therefore drawn, now this way, now that. As James himself puts it, he is like a surge of the sea, driven by the wind and tossed. The immediate reference of the word, as seen from the context, is to the prayer of the man who comes to God with a divided heart. He prays, but he prays, so to speak, with two hearts, with a heart that is turned towards God and with a heart that is turned away from God. There is no true committal of himself and of his way unto God; 'and let not that man think,' says the Apostle, 'that he shall receive anything of the Lord.'

¶ One of the most gifted of our modern poets has taken James's word, his very word, as the title for a poem which has been justly described as one of the most subtle, penetrating, pathetic poems of modern times. The late Mr. Arthur Hugh Clough, in his 'Dipsychus,' has drawn with great power, with searching keenness, the irresolute waverings, the fore-doomed compromises, the insistent, self-accusing of the double-minded man, the man to whom even his tempter says at last, 'Hearken, you will not take to anything. Whatever happens, don't I see you still living no life at all? Will you go on thus until death end you? Yet, as for you, you will hardly have the courage to die outright. You will somehow halve even death.'[1]

1. James is speaking of the soul in its deepest relations with God. He means by 'double-mindedness' the two great contrary principles of gravitation—the attraction of the soul to God and its entanglement in the world; but by analogy, and for the sake of illustration, we may apply his principle to questions of a less definitely spiritual kind, involving the wise conduct of life. Vistas of life are opened out before us which present in varying force and in endless combination the most potent motives by which man is swayed. Luxury, indolence, fame, power, the praise of men, all in turn offer us a realm of fancied happiness, if we will but fall down and worship them. But even they will not brook a divided allegiance: we cannot serve two masters, even though both are worldly. The pursuit of power is not compatible with indolence; a man has to choose between wealth and political power and dignity, or even between the line of life which will make him a great figure in the world whilst he lives, and those more quiet but more enduring efforts which will preserve his name to future generations, though it may

[1] G. Jackson.

have been little known to his own. Even in this sphere of things, then, we have to choose, we have to renounce. We need not shut our eyes to any of the facts of life, but we must recognize the limitation of our desires and of our possibilities of action.

¶ If two men are at the wheel with opposing notions of direction and destiny, how will it fare with the boat? If an orchestra have two conductors, both wielding their batons at the same time and with conflicting conceptions of the score, what will become of the band? And a man whose mind is like that of two men, flirting with contrary ideals at the same time, will live a life 'all sixes and sevens,' and nothing will move to purposeful and definite issues.[1]

2. And now, if we turn back from the province of worldly wisdom to the domain of spiritual life, surely we shall find the same thing. Who would deny that the ideally perfect Christian would be not double-minded but single-minded; that he would be drawn only in the direction of holiness, that his purpose would be uniform and consistent, that no other motives would have weight with him, that—having put his hand to the plough—he would not look back? If we look back at the lives of those who have by general consent attained the highest holiness themselves, and done the most to lift the spiritual level of mankind—men like St. Francis and St. Bernard, like Xavier and Wesley—what is their most distinctive mark? Surely that they were single-minded; that they had one object clearly before them, and pressed forward to it with undivided will—their 'eye was single,' and their 'whole body was full of light.' But they did not attain to this without a struggle; of that we may be sure. Even Paul, long after his conversion, was conscious of the misery of a divided self; he found that when he would do good, evil was ever present with him, and that two 'laws,' two principles of life, were ever warring for the mastery.

[1] J. H. Jowett, *My Daily Meditation for the Circling Year*, 292.

Double-mindedness comes, James tells us, from want of faith; and faith has two sides —the moral and the intellectual—and some failures will proceed chiefly from defects of the intellect, others from defects of will and character. Some minds are by nature hesitating and cautious, unwilling to accept any view as final, waiting for fresh evidence or for a new adjustment of the old, till life has slipped away; others are hasty and unbalanced, slaves of the last paradox, devotees of each new fashion of thought—they are 'ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth'; to-day they believe, to-morrow an article in a magazine has swept away the foundation of their faith from the sand on which it was built. Those whose weakness is a moral one may have, perhaps, their intellectual foundation sure; they may never have been troubled with a doubt, but they stand shivering on the brink, afraid to make the plunge and strike out for the further shore; they will not commit themselves to the God in whom they profess to believe, they will not cut off their retreat from the world which they profess to despise.

¶ We have an old word in our Christian vocabulary which I greatly like and little hear to-day. Good men and women, getting up in testimony—what they used to call a 'Love-feast'—would tell you how in such a time they 'decided' for Christ. And you will hear evangelists sometimes, revivalists, conducting special services, who will speak to individuals and ask them if they have 'decided' for Christ. That is the general word. It does not mean, of course, that we choose Christ. Christ chooses us before we choose Him. Nevertheless, it is true so far that if ever we are to be upon Christ's side it will be because, consciously, deliberately, willingly, we have ranged ourselves with Him.[1]

[1] G. Jackson.

Where Men Are Equal.

Ja. i. 9-11.—'But let the brother of low degree glory in his high estate: and the rich, in that he is made low: because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away. For the sun ariseth with the scorching wind, and withereth the grass; and the flower thereof falleth, and the grace of the fashion of it perisheth: so also shall the rich man fade away in his goings.'

Equality is one of those things about which men talk a great deal, but of which they see and know very little. Hobbes, the English essayist, insisted that all men are essentially equal. Thomas Jefferson, when he wrote the Declaration of Independence, asserted that one of the truths we hold to be self-evident is that all men are created equal. Modern trade unionism is based largely upon the theory of the equality of workmen in the field of production. Socialism, in its most common interpretation, would build its political and economic structure upon the hypothesis that men are turned out of a common mould and under given conditions will act according to rule.

But so far as human relationships are concerned, this equality has not progressed far beyond the theoretical stage. We all admit that men were created with equal rights. Democracy attempts to see that they come into the world with equal opportunities. It is one of the tenets of our national life that all men are entitled to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, but it is a matter of universal observation that all men do not equally enjoy these privileges. From the days when Plato wrote his 'Ideal Republic' until the present, political and economic idealists have attempted to insure these rights, and most nations have incorporated into their fundamental law some guarantee of them. In the face of all these declarations and theories we are forced to admit the fact of tremendous inequalities among men. Lowell in one of his essays illustrates the impossibility of absolute human equality by the old saw, 'If two men ride a horse, one must of necessity ride behind.' A group of young men graduate from the same class in school and begin life with seemingly equal chances. One becomes a millionaire, and wastes his strength and loses his soul by high living and fills an early grave. Another goes his prosaic way, taking his rightful place in society, church and business. He does not become very wealthy or very famous or very pious, but lives to a ripe old age, serves God and his fellow-men and leaves the world richer for his having lived in it. Another devotes his entire time to literature, writes poetry which his own age does not appreciate, lives in obscurity and dies in poverty, but becomes immortal as succeeding generations unveil his genius. Actually there is no equality in the sight of men, because each man has his own standard of judgment and no two men fit into the same measure.

But there is a place where all men are equal. Not equal in their attainments, their worthiness, or their usefulness, but in something infinitely more important than any of these. This paragraph remains a mystery unless we study it as the description of the place where all men are equal. The Epistle of James is a book of paradoxes until one comes to realize that the author is writing to the church of Jesus Christ of the principles that obtain within the Kingdom of God. In ordinary conversation we speak of trials as misfortunes, but James, writing as an apologist for the Kingdom of God, says, 'Count it all joy, my brethren, when we fall into manifold trials.' We are inclined to say that people are born with common-sense or without it, but James says, 'If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God.' We look upon patience as one of the passive virtues, but James speaks of it as a great dynamic. Now we find him uttering something even stranger than that which has gone before. 'Let the brother of low degree glory in his high estate.' And as though that were not sufficiently startling, he adds, 'and the rich in that he is brought low.'

But when one comes to realize the equalizing power of the Kingdom of God, he catches the significance and consistency of these seeming contradictions. Regardless of the lowli-

ness of the citizen of the Kingdom; regardless of the countless ways in which he may be overshadowed by more conspicuous fellow-citizens—in the one all-important matter he is their equal.

The brother of low degree may well rejoice in his high estate, for it consists in being a son of God. That is the high station of the lowly brother. What does it matter if a prince of the blood may be clothed in rags, if there be no ring on his finger or courtiers following in his train, he is still a son of the king, and none of all his brothers can be more. For even the earthly analogies of royal families do not perfectly illustrate his case. In terrestrial kingdoms the rule of primogeniture maintains. The descendants of the younger sons with each succeeding generation are further removed from the royal family, until they eventually become merely poor relatives, and the royal favours they enjoy are through charity rather than right. But all the sons of God stand upon an equal footing.

'The rich in that he is brought low.' We can conceive of a lowly man glorying in something that seems to him to be an advancement, but this second paradox seems, upon its face, to be impossible of explanation. The word here translated 'brought low' comes from the same root as the verb 'to hunger' or 'be in want.' Thus the rich man who is 'brought low' (and 'rich man' is but a concrete term used in antithesis to 'lowly') this man is really brought to a sense of his own need. He has come to a realization that he is not self-sufficient. It is because fortunate men come to believe they can buy their way within any gate that it is easier for a camel to go through the needle's eye than for such men to enter the Kingdom.

This man of high degree may well rejoice that he has been brought to a realization of the fact that there is no such thing as the autonomy of such a small person as he. He, too, is a son, but he is no more than a son. He has come to his sonship by the same means as the poor man. His wealth and position have had nothing to do with bringing him to it, and can in no way assist him in advancing his position among the princes.

Lest someone should feel that this doctrine is somewhat mystical, the practical-minded James illustrates it so convincingly that there is no possible refutation. 'Because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away. For the sun ariseth with the scorching wind, and withereth the grass; and the flower thereof falleth, and the grace of the fashion of it perisheth: so also shall the rich man fade away in his goings.' Every community is frequently and forcefully reminded of the fact that those in seemingly the highest and most secure positions hold only a transitory tenure. Between the rising of the sun and its setting they may descend from the heights to the depths in their financial, social and moral reputations. If any earthly standard were to be the criterion for measuring men it would require continual remeasurements and equality would be an absolute and eternal impossibility.

Thus, James says, the Kingdom of God does not depend upon these things in determining the value of a man. There is one supreme test. Is he a son of God?[1]

Blessing From Temptation.

Ja. i. 12.—'Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he hath been approved, he shall receive the crown of life.'

How daring is the Bible in the associations it brings before us! We should not have been surprised if the word 'blessed' had been wedded to the word 'love,' or to one of Love's sisters—'Mercy' and 'Truth.' But the Bible creates unexpected communions. 'Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest.' Blessedness and chastening! The marriage seems almost forced and unnatural. 'Blessed is the man that endureth temptation.' To bring blessedness and temptation into fellowship is like the association of day and night. Shall we rather say it is like the association of soot and diamonds? The one is made out of the other. Ruskin has shown us how the purest crystals can be fashioned

[1] W. McClean Work.

out of the grimiest mire. Some of our loveliest and most brilliant colours are manufactured out of tar. Surely this is the trend of the apostolic evangel. Apparent hostility may be converted into advantage. Temptations may be compelled to yield blessedness. The bee with its poisonous sting may be so used as to become our minister, yielding us nothing but honey. 'Therefore,' cries the Apostle, 'count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations.' Estimate the bee from the standpoint of the honey. Adjudge the soot from the standpoint of the diamond. Appraise the tar from the standpoint of the brilliant hues. Calculate temptation from the standpoint of blessedness. 'Count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations,' knowing that temptation may be made to minister to stronger, sweeter, and more spacious life.

1. Now first of all, let us never forget that temptation is whatever we make it; its bad effect depends upon ourselves. How little can we measure the possibilities of evil in our own case, or so much as guess what we are capable of! Temptation too often brings about such a ghastly appalling self-revelation that we can hardly believe it is our own real selves we see. Yes, we are continually to recognize the distinction between that which comes upon us from without, and that which we find in ourselves. The Divine Teacher of the Church Himself draws attention to the contrast—'There is nothing from without a man, that entering into him can defile him; but the things which come out of him, those are they that defile the man.' As in the natural world we see one plant nutritious and attractive in its fruit and foliage, and another the reverse; or as we see a tree rearing its branches with wild luxuriance, reckless independence into the summer air, and a lichen clinging to the rock tenaciously as if afraid a single filament should let go its hold—yet all springing from the same soil, drinking in the same moisture, bathed with the same sunlight, we know that for one to be aspiring, and another recumbent, for one to be wholesome and beautiful, and another poisonous and ill-favoured, is not due to any external conditions, so much as to the kind of life which belongs to each. So with us, when temptations in any form assail us, it is that within ourselves which makes them what they are, baleful or helpful—stones against which we stumble or fall, or ways and means by which we rise to more vigorous strength, richer happiness, and higher levels of life.

2. In this way every temptation resisted brings us a 'crown of life.' That is how we reason in the domain of the flesh. The worth of all physical exercise consists in the overcoming of resistances. Whether it be in lifting weights, in working the oar, or in driving the wheel, we have to fight certain resistances, and the muscles are developed in the struggle. Physical resistance brings to the muscles a 'crown of life.' We sometimes say when we have been out for a brisk walk, and have battled against a stiff wind, 'There, that has just made me feel alive.' We went out feeling heavy and dull and sluggish. Battling with resistance vitalized us, and we returned with a 'crown of life.' Resistance to all evil suggestion vitalizes the moral and spiritual powers, and enriches them with increased life. When resistance is slackened, the reservoir of life becomes impoverished. That was the condition of some of Paul's Corinthian friends. They had ceased to fight, and instead of becoming spiritual athletes they had lapsed into moral and spiritual invalids. 'Many are . . . sickly among you and not a few sleep.' They had lost their abundant vitality; they were losing their 'crown of life.'

For he who, though his fights be all defeats,
Still fights,
Enters at last
The heavenly Jerusalem's rejoicing streets
With glory more and more triumphal rites
Than always-conquering Joshua's when his blast
The frighted walls of Jericho down cast;
And, lo! the glad surprise
Of peace beyond surmise
More than in common saints for ever in his eyes.

3. How beautiful and suggestive is that paraphrase of an ancient version of the account of Abraham's supreme trial; 'It came to pass after these things that God did glorify him'; glorified him by giving him an opportunity of exhibiting his absolute trust under unparalleled circumstances, and of winning his illustrious style and title as 'Father of the faithful.' Yes, be the evil, the temptation what it may, the love of God can transmute its curse into blessing, can find even within its horrors a power of healing and purifying and elevating the soul, can forge fresh beauty out of the very weapons of the devil's malice. It has been truly said that it is wonder surpassing wonder, when, through man's very falls, and because he is sensible of the degradation of them, the Spirit of God begins to weave in his heart the slender delicate threads of a new possibility of moral and spiritual beauty.

Virtue may be assailed, but never hurt,
Surprised by unjust force, but not enthralled;
Yea, even that which mischief meant most harm,
Shall in the happy tidal prove most glory;
But evil on itself shall back recoil.

¶ The text is a verse of climbing power. It begins with man, it ends with God. It begins with earth, it ends with heaven, it begins with struggle, it ends with a crown.

Not, Blessed is the man who is never tempted. That would mean to be out of the world. The Lord wants us to be in the world, though not of it. Ignorance is not strength, innocence is not virtue.

Not, Blessed is the man who seeks temptation. 'Lead us not into temptation.' Unnecessary risk is fool-hardiness, not courage. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof. Enough tempting will come without our seeking it.

Not, Cursed is the man who is tempted. Temptation cannot make us sinful. Our consent alone can. A note does not bind, until we endorse it. It is not feeling the temptation, but yielding, that is sinful.

Blessed is the man that endureth, stands up under it, resists, conquers. 'Blessed,' for it means new wisdom, new strength, new joy,—'the crown of life.'[1]

The Purpose of Temptation.

Ja. i. 12.—'Blessed is the man that endureth temptation.'

WHAT is the purpose of temptation? The purpose is threefold.

1. Temptation is to *exercise our moral muscles*, and to prevent our becoming morally flaccid and feeble. The really dangerous parts of life are not the moments of battle, but the moments of rest. When, after the battle of Cannae in the Second Punic War, all Italy lay under Hannibal's feet, it was not the Roman power that shattered his forces, but the luxury of Capua in which he pitched his winter quarters. The whole course of the history of the world might have been different had Hannibal not been too comfortable! So it is with us. The moral world without temptation or hindrance would be a world of useless weaklings.

When the fight begins within himself
A man's worth something.

It is the trouble, the difficulty, the temptation, that is the making of us. In training our body to get 'fit' we have to exercise each muscle again and again, and the proper rule for such exercise is that it should be continued until the muscle just feels tired. God knows that it is so with the soul. If the soul is to be morally 'fit,' each fibre of it must be tried and tested, well nigh up to the breaking-point. God never goes beyond. We do. Sometimes in our exercises we use the movements improperly; in our heedlessness we carry the strain too far, and the fibre snaps and is permanently weakened. Sometimes, too, in our heedlessness a similar thing happens in the moral exercises which God sets us. We neg-

[1] M. D. Babcock, *Thoughts for Every-Day Living*, 92.

lect the directions to be 'instant in prayer.' We are proud in our own strength, and strain a muscle too far. We yield, the moral fibre gives, snaps; and though it may heal—and, thank God, generally does heal—yet it is undeniably for all time weaker. The question arises—we cannot help asking it—'Ought God to set us exercises which involve a risk like that?' We ask it reverently, but it is a fair question. Well, the answer is that there are risks in everything worth the learning. Take any sport or exercise that develops the body: skating, gymnastics, football, cricket—there are risks in them all. Why should it be different with the development of the soul? It is not different.

We say it reverently, but none the less confidently, God *cannot* make a perfect Christian without temptation, and God deliberately accepts the risk for the greater gain. The more perfect the Christian, the greater the number of risks through which he has to pass. Had God chosen otherwise, His work would have been a machine, not a man. It is only the power to do wrong that makes a virtue of the doing of right. What merit is it in a statue that it remains immovable on its pedestal? Man's glory, in Milton's phrase, is that he is

> Able to stand, yet free to fall;

that he can say with Shakespeare:

> 'Tis one thing to be tempted, Escalus,
> Another thing to fall.

¶ It is a saying of Henry Drummond that if it were possible for us to construct a human being we would have to put into him a certain percentage of temptation that he might be rightly and completely developed. It is true. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil still grows in the garden of man's life. It is a necessity to his own maturity. Every life has its moral crisis. They are the pivots on which its destiny turns. They bring to the soul great opportunities of moral victory, or great enticements to moral defeat.[1]

[1] W. Watson, *A Young Man's Ideal*, 113.

2. Temptation is permitted in order *to show us our weak points*, and in order that no weak point may be neglected. One of the most magnificent tales which the genius of Rudyard Kipling has given to us is entitled *The Ship that Found Herself*. It opens with the christening of the *Dimbula*. The owner's daughter, Miss Frazier, has just given it its name, and is talking with the captain:

'And now,' said Miss Frazier, 'she's a real ship, isn't she?'

'Oh, she's not so bad,' the skipper replied cautiously. 'But I'm sayin' that it takes more than christenin' to mak' a ship. In the nature of things, Miss Frazier, if ye follow me, she's just iron and rivets and plates put into the form of a ship. She has to find herself yet.'

'And how will you do it?' the girl asked.

'We can do no more than drive and steer her, and so forth; but if we have rough weather this trip—it's likely—she'll learn the rest by heart.'

And so the ship goes out into the broad Atlantic, and under the stress of the storm every bolt and every beam gets a voice.

'What's the use?' a few hundred rivets chattered. 'We've given—we've given, and the sooner we confess that we can't keep the ship together, and go off our little heads, the better it will be. No rivet forged can stand this strain.'

'No one rivet was ever meant to. Share it among you,' the steam answered.

'The others can have my share. I'm going to pull out,' said a rivet in one of the forward plates.

'If you go, others will follow,' hissed the steam. 'There's nothing so contagious in a boat as rivets going. Why, I knew a little chap like you—he was an eighth of an inch fatter, though—on a steamer—to be sure, she was only 1,200 tons, now I come to think of it—in exactly the same place as you are. He pulled out in a bit of a bobble of a sea, not half as bad as this, and he started all his friends, and the plates opened like a furnace-door, and I had to climb into the nearest fog-bank while the boat went down.'

'Now, that's peculiarly disgraceful,' said the rivet. 'Fatter than me, was he, and in a steamer not half our tonnage? Reedy little peg! I blush for the family, sir.' He settled himself more firmly than ever in his place, and the steam chuckled.

'You see,' he went on quite gravely, 'a rivet, and especially a rivet in your position, is really the one indispensable part of the ship.'

3. Temptation is sent *to teach us the lesson of our final dependence on Christ*, the Source of all strength. If temptation were simply a series of moral exercises in which a failure meant certain loss, then, however great the gain of a success, one might doubt whether God could justifiably expose His children to the risk. Grant that a failure means a will-power permanently weaker (and this is certainly the case), grant that it leaves scars which nothing can eradicate (and this, too, is certainly the case), then the risk becomes too awful even for Omniscience to face unless there be somewhere some compensation. God has provided such compensation. The lesson that He wants His children to learn when they are weakened and humiliated is a more complete dependence on Christ.

¶ I know what I am saying and can point at the times and places when I should have fallen if I had been able to rely for guidance upon nothing better than a commandment or a deduction. But the pure, calm, heroic image of Jesus confronted me, and I succeeded. I had no doubt as to what He would have done, and through Him I did not doubt what I ought to do.[1]

Why should I fear the darkest hour,
Or tremble at the tempter's power?
Jesus vouchsafes to be my tower.

Though hot the fight, why quit the field?
Why must I either flee or yield,
Since Jesus is my mighty shield?

Against me earth and hell combine,
But on my side is power Divine;
Jesus is all, and He is mine.[2]

[1] Mark Rutherford.
[2] John Newton.

The Crown of Life.

Ja. i. 12.—'When he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.'

That is to say, he shall receive life as a crown. 'Blessed *is* the man (not merely blessed *shall he be*) who is enduring probation, for it is just in so far as he is being approved that he shall be receiving life for a crown; the very crown of life which the Lord hath promised to them that love Him.'

1. There are two totally different words for 'crown' in Scripture. One is the *official* or *monarch's crown*, worn as an emblem of authority and dignity. The other is the *personal* or *victor's crown*, the laurel crown, given as a reward of faithful and persistent struggle, the outcome and result of triumph in the fight or in the race. This latter is the word here—something gained as an outcome of wrestle and struggle. Now, the reward of life, of struggling life, is just more life, life more abundantly. There is life that *is* a struggle: there is life that is the issue of a struggle.

What we need is life, just life, not as a mere gift, but as a crown. We like to see things crowned, the year crowned with the Lord's goodness, any effort crowned with success. Now a life-struggle, so far as it is a triumph, is attended by a life-crown. This is the law of our being from which there is no escape. There is a mastery, an approval, a result of enduring which we are called to gain now and here, as well as then and yonder. Life is given us here out of which to make more life. We are possessed of something to control, we are not merely to be controlled. We are to be the sovereigns, not merely the subjects or the sports, of temptation and circumstance.

2. As there are two different words for 'crown' in Scripture, so are there two different words for 'life.' One is the life of circumstance or environment, transient and changeful. This is the life to which the Apostle John

refers when he speaks of 'the pride of life,' which just strives and struggles hard to keep death at bay. But it has death encamped within it, and the hand of death is ever pressing on it. Our outer phenomenal life is but a living death. Decay's effacing finger obliterates its freshness and durableness. We gain a prize, we win a place in life; and lo! while yet the flush of triumph is on the face, the solemn feeling steals over us that as the colour mantling the face changes and passes, so it is with all things that afford a bright but transient delight. How soon the tarnish gathers on the medal that is the student's ambition, how soon the very crown or chain of office needs to be renewed, how soon the plate and furniture and jewellery and all the garnishings of sculpture and painting get swept into dustbins. 'These are the things,' said Dr. Johnson to Garrick, 'which make life a misery and death a terror.' What we need is life—a life that is the crown and fruit of enduring struggle—a life that has on itself and all its belongings a stamp of deathlessness.

There is a difference between existence and life. A stone exists and lasts, but it does not live. The difference is as great as that between merely being and genuine well-being. For what is life? Modern science calls it a tendency towards adjustment, realized by test and stress and strain and struggle. The tree that battles successfully with the blast is thereby strengthened, and is fitted for living in its new climate and environment. But when the adjustment is complete and perfect, what then? It is life crowned. Trial, testing, temptation is the way toward such approved life, and the diversities of temptation are the instruments of God's educative wisdom. Trial-temptation, enticement-temptation come to all; but it is our deportment in temptation that determines the measure of our adjustment to our environment. We are being tried and tested, each issue attests success or failure in this adjusting process; and at last this issues in the grand trial time before us all—when the verdict will just be the sum of the individual verdicts that are being now registered.

'He that endureth to the end'—he that *is enduring to the end*—the same is being saved. This is *life*—the life in which, as in an imperishable element, we live and move and have not only our being but our indestructible well-being.

'To them that love him.' How close the connection between living and loving, if indeed they be not one and the same. Loving the Lord is the very secret and method of enduring temptation. Loving Him is life's crown—the crown of that free, unfettered life which eludes the grasp of death and escapes its fatal touch.

¶ When Dante had climbed to the summit of the hill of Purgatory, where he vanquished the passions which like rebels had dethroned him, he was crowned with crown and mitre, the symbols of self-mastery and self-sacrifice, which according to James are the true service and worship of Christian life.[1]

¶ On an Alpine slope there is a village which speaks to the traveller at every step. As he ascends the village road he observes on the headstone over every door a cross hewn in the stone. It speaks to him of his own toiling, uphill journey, when lo, as he nears the end, he observes a church tower top the village climb, and on its head is a crown. The sense of joy, peace and rest brought to the traveller's heart at sight of that crown tells us the story of James's words, 'When he hath been approved, he shall receive the crown of life, which he promised to them that love him.'[2]

The Source of Temptation.

Ja. i. 13, 14.—'Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempteth no man: but each man is tempted, when he is drawn away by his own lust, and enticed' (RV).

The subject is the source of temptation. It is stated absolutely and directly that it is not of God: 'Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be

[1] W. Boyd Carpenter, *The Wisdom of James the Just*, 125.
[2] J. MacDougall, *The Modern Conflict*, 23.

tempted with evil, and he himself tempteth no man.' We have the true explanation of the matter in the fourteenth verse: 'But each man is tempted, when he is drawn away by his own lust, and enticed.'

1. There are certain qualities which we conceive to be in God, and without which we cannot think of Him. They belong, we say, to the essence of God; they are an essential part of His being. When we think of Him we have to think of these qualities. For example, we say that love is of the essence of God. If we try to form an idea of what God is, we must think of love; it belongs to His nature. Without it He would not be God. In the same way we say that truth is of the essence of God; He would not be God without it. So too, justice, wisdom, unchangeableness, holiness, are all of the essence of God. But if these qualities belong to God, He can have nothing to do with their opposites. Thus if God be truth, He cannot lie, 'He cannot deny Himself'; if He be justice, He can have no part with that which is unjust; if He be wisdom, He cannot err; if He be unchangeableness, He must be the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever; and if He be holiness, He must be in utter opposition to evil in every shape and form.

This is the argument of the Apostle. God cannot be tempted of evil, because being holy He is untemptable, insusceptible of it, because God and evil are eternally opposed to each other; they can have no dealings together, no compromise, they are absolutely and for ever separate. Evil has no charm for God. His whole nature repels it. He cannot be tempted with it. What then follows from this? Just what James adds in the text: 'Neither tempteth he any man.' If it be impossible that evil should approach God, it is equally impossible that God should bring evil—moral evil—near us, so as to tempt us by it. If God could tempt us with evil, He would cease to be holy, and would cease to be God. Suppose we were to see one whom we regarded as a good man trying to lead another into evil. At once we should say it was impossible for a good man to be consciously and wilfully tempting another to do wrong. Much truer then must it be of God, who is unchangeably good, that He tempts no one to do evil.

There is nothing, however, that we are readier to do than to lay the blame of our misdeeds upon another, or at least to shift the blame from ourselves. Thus Adam when accused blamed Eve, and Eve blamed the serpent. Aaron made a golden calf, and when reproached blamed the people. Pilate gave up Christ to be crucified, and put the blame upon the multitude. A man falls into grievous sin, and pleads the force of circumstances. Another dallies with a low appetite, and when he becomes its victim blames the weakness of the flesh. Another says, no one was ever so fiercely tempted as he, never has any man had to struggle with evil passions as he has had. Besides, says still another, what use is there in struggling at all, when fate has already, long before we entered on it, mapped out the path along which we must tread? In these and like ways men find refuge from the reproofs of conscience and excuse themselves for sin. Whatever particular form such excuse for wrongdoing may take, it comes in the end practically to saying, 'I am tempted of God.'

(1) Now, there is no use denying that there are certain circumstances which provoke to evil much more strongly than others. We yet believe that, however much we have to do —and we have a good deal to do—with the ordering of our own circumstances, God has a providential relation to them. It is therefore difficult to define the relation between these two things. If life were so ordered as to make it impossible for us successfully to resist temptation, then we should cease to be responsible for falling into sin. Granting that God places us where we find ourselves in life, if our circumstances were such as to make it impossible not to be conquered by them, then certainly moral responsibility would cease. The question therefore is, are there any circumstances so adverse to goodness that a morally earnest man may not by the grace of God rise above them? Joseph

was in circumstances so adverse to goodness that in his place nine men out of ten would have fallen. But he said, 'How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?' Daniel's famous companions counted the terror of the fiery furnace of less account than unfaithfulness to God. Cornelius, that obscure Roman officer, lived in the atmosphere of a soldier's barracks at a time and in an age when soldiers were less moral and less religious than they are now, and lived alone, too, with few near him to stimulate his religious life, and yet his name comes down to us as that of 'a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, who gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway.' Paul's testimony on this point is conclusive, and gives the answer to our question. 'There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man (that is to say, 'usual to man': or such as is every man's experience, but human, adjusted to the range of human powers of resistance, no temptation but such as man can bear), but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make the way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.'

¶ In the Tower of Constance, an old prison on the southern coast of France, they show you graven again and again on the stones of one of the dungeons the word 'Resist.' In that hideous place a woman, Marie Duran, was kept for forty years, and during all that time her employment was graving that one word with a piece of iron. It is a word that needs to be engraven deep on every young man's heart. 'Some people,' says Professor Drummond, 'sink under temptation; they are overborne and debased by it. Others by it become divine; they meet it and fight it and are made strong. Yet it is the same temptation that comes to both.' [1]

(2) Take another case. Men lay the blame of their sin upon the strength of their passions. Again it cannot be denied that just as there are outward circumstances in which it is more difficult than in others to resist temptation, so there are inward circumstances which make it a greater struggle for some men than for others to subdue the craving of passion or appetite. Inclination to evil, strong at any time and in every man, is in many cases so strong that the difficulties of resistance are immensely aggravated. This is one of the mysteries of life that fill the thoughtful man with sorrow and perplexity. We see children born into the world with the seeds of crime or disease or the tendency to sinful excess deeply imbedded in their nature. Yet no one is responsible for what he brings or does not bring with him into the world, but only for the use he makes of what he has. How some should be born with an inherited tendency to vice stronger than that which belongs to all men as the descendants of the first Adam, while others should escape this second inoculation of evil, is one of those mysterious elements in the problem of evil which baffle and sadden us. There is this, however, to be said. If we belong to our past, if we are in a large measure what our ancestors have made us, we are also and no less what God has made us. We have a double ancestry; we belong to Him. We each of us bear an immediate relation to Him: 'All souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine.' We belong to God; we are more than what the past has made us. The past does not determine our fate; it determines only our trial. It determines what our trial is to be—whether it is to be with intemperance, with criminal instincts, with anger, with greed, with dishonesty, with lust; but it does not determine the issue of the conflict. That depends upon the man himself, and on his faithfulness to that in him which is of Divine giving.

'Thou knowest,' Burns says, addressing God:

> Thou know'st that Thou hast formèd me
> With passions wild and strong;
> And list'ning to their witching voice
> Has often led me wrong.

[1] D. Watson, *The Heritage of Youth*, 131.

He was tempted, and tempted perhaps as few are tempted, with a fierceness which we may not be able to conceive, and which fills one's heart with feelings of profoundest sympathy; but he laid the blame of his excesses at the wrong door when he laid it at God's.

¶ For what of the ape and tiger there is in man he is not responsible, but for petting and pampering it when he should be chaining and starving it.[1]

2. Having stated that it is not of God, James goes on in the next verse to give the true explanation: 'Each man is tempted, when he is drawn away by his own lust, and enticed.' If we would tell the truth about the matter, that is it. Adam blamed Eve. Had he had the manliness to tell the truth he would have confessed how pleasant the forbidden fruit was to look upon, how desirable to possess. If those who blame their circumstances for their sin would tell the truth, they would confess how easy and pleasant it is to chime in with circumstances; they would tell of that secret hankering after the forbidden pleasure which they will hardly acknowledge to themselves, but which is, nevertheless, the real cause of their failure. If those who blame the strength of their passions would tell the truth, they would confess how little it goes with their inclinations to offer even the least resistance, how, as pleasant music, the witching voice sounds in their ears, how, in short, they are drawn away of their own lust and enticed.

We cannot help being tempted, we cannot help evil desires presenting themselves to our minds, but we can help harbouring them; there is no need for our dallying with temptation, no need for hesitation. Our wisdom is to stop our ears against the 'witching voice' that would entice us, to shut our eyes against vanity, and unhesitatingly choose the right. That is not easy for any of us, and it is harder for some than for others. But there are two encouragements for us all.

[1] M. D. Babcock, *Thoughts for Every-Day Living*, 132.

(1) In the first place, *resistance becomes easier as we go on resisting.* The man who has overcome his temptation once finds it much easier to overcome a second time. Our moral powers, like our intellectual and physical powers, grow with exercise. 'Each victory helps us some other to win,' and the time comes when resistance has grown into a habit, with all the instinctive ease that habit engenders, and temptation has lost half its power, or ceases to be temptation. Let the man who is battling with it only once overcome, and the next onslaught will be more easily met.

(2) A second encouragement is that *we are not alone in temptation.* Do you think that God looks on unmoved upon our struggling, or that He does not see where the battle is the hardest and whose need is the sorest? Is it not ever the way of Divine grace to give strength to the feeble, to succour the poor and the needy, to pluck the firebrand out of the burning, to raise up them that are ready to fall, to come to the help of him that hath no helper? If we cry to Him, will not He who is our Saviour, who was tempted in all respects like ourselves, strengthen us from on high with His victorious, ever-living power? Whether our battle be with outward circumstances or with inward disorder, or with both combined, God's help will be found to be the most readily and the most abundantly given to the warrior who is hardest beset. All souls are His, even the soul of the man who seems most heavily weighted by the past, whose evil inheritance makes resistance doubly hard, whose own indulgences may have forged bars of steel around his life. It is ever to such that the message of Divine love comes with glad tidings of forgiveness and of power, saying, 'Son, be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven; weak one, be strong, my grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness.' It is as we know our own weakness that we know the strength of the Divine grace. God will not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able, but will with the temptation provide also the way of escape. Only 'the soul that sinneth, it shall die; the

son shall not bear the iniquity of the father'; only when we make it our own will the past bear us down. God is mightier than the past, mightier than our circumstances, mightier than our own habits, mightier than the enticement of our own lust, more than a match for all against us.[1]

¶ In the Life of Dr. Stephenson, the founder of 'The Children's Home,' we read how one of the outcast boys whom he had rescued was enabled to resist temptation.

One year on Covenant Sunday, the first Sunday in January, everybody had gone to the evening service, but a boy who was being trained as an engineer was left behind to look after the taps, which were in danger of being frozen. One of the Sisters, whose room looked out over some leads, had left a fire burning brightly and the blind up. When she returned she found the window open, the dressing-table overturned, the looking-glass on the floor, and some other marks of disturbance; but some small change she had left on the chest of drawers still remained there untouched, and her watch and chain were also in their place. She at once called the Governor's attention to the state of her room. He went outside the window, and found on the frozen snow on the leads the print of boot-nails, which he promptly copied. Then going to the house to which the boy in question belonged, he asked to see his boots, and, as he anticipated, found that the nails corresponded with the prints in the snow. He went up to the bedroom and asked the boy what he had been doing, and on his attempting to stammer out some excuse, forbade him to speak, but told him to get up at once and come and see him at the office. When the lad came, he begged him not to tell lies, but to confess what had really taken place. Breaking quite down, the boy told him with sobs, that he had passed that window on his way to examine the taps, and saw the money lying on the drawers inside. He had got in through the window, and was about to put his hand on it, when something said to him, 'If you touch that money you are a thief,' and he had turned round suddenly, sprung on to the dressing-table, kicking it over in his haste, looking-glass and all, and fled as for his life. It was his victory, and the beginning for him of an honourable Christian career.[1]

[1] D. Fairweather, *Bound in the Spirit*, 36ff.

The Sinner's Progress.

Ja. i. 14, 15.—'Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.'

Hogarth has left us a familiar series of pictures entitled 'The Rake's Progress,' in which the career of a profligate spendthrift is sketched from its commencement to its close. Our text is the picture of *The Sinner's Progress*.

1. Where do we begin the story? Far back we must go, even to the very power of sinning which is in our human freewill. As the song of Shelley or the drama of Shakespeare lies folded in the lyric of dramatic possibilities of the unconscious infancy—a formless, unrecognized, unconscious thing, but still a real thing, without which the song of drama could never have been,—so with the sin of yesterday. We cannot tell its real history till we have gone back far behind its earliest temptation, and found the power of doing it involved in the very humanity of the man who did it. There is where all sins run back and find their unity. The elegant, fastidious, transgression and the low, grovelling lust—trace them far enough back, and they all run together in that one great reservoir, the human power of sin.

¶ The *fact* of what is meant by original sin is as mysterious and inexplicable as the origin of evil, but it is obviously as much a fact. There is a fault and vice in the *race*, which, given time, as surely develops into actual sin, as our physical constitution, given at birth, does into sickness and physical death.[2]

2. Now, the power of sin being there, the next stage in the sin's history is its passage

[1] W. Bradfield, *The Life of the Rev. T. B. Stephenson*, 262.

[2] *Life and Letters of Dean Church*, 248.

into a desire. Here, first, in this passage of power into desire, the subjective and the objective meet. That which before had been within the heart now feels the touch of outside life; the power of sin which is within the nature is found out by the temptation which is outside the nature, in the world. And so the second stage in the history of a sin is reached.

¶ What says the master of the study of human nature, in his tragedy of Macbeth? These are Shakespeare's words—

> How oft the sight of means to do ill deeds
> Makes ill deeds done.

That is one thing—the allurement. Written in my nature is a law that when certain things are seen outside me, they quicken the desire inside. And if I do not bring my will to bear upon my desire so as to control it, the desire passes into action. The glass of intoxicants quickens the drink thirst in the man who has that thirst; the sight of the gaming table, the news of the horserace quickens the gambling mania; the means of lust, the unclean story sets aflame the lustful desire; the chance of overreaching, the opportunity of wronging another, in a man of small conscientiousness, quickens the desire to seize it. So I am between two temptations: the object—the desire; the seen—the unseen; the allurement—the appetite; the means to do ill deeds—the desire to do ill deeds. But these things are not sin. I am not responsible for them except in so far as I may have encouraged them. To a very large extent I am unable to control these things. The sight quickens my desire almost before I am aware. The objects I did not place there; my desires were born with me, part of my fateful heritage. But neither object nor desire makes sin; so far I am free.[1]

3. The next step is marked by a sharpness and promptness that these others have not had. The will may hesitate before it yields to the desire, but when it does yield it is a single act. We may surround it with all sorts of unreality. We may say it is a necessity. We may even try to make it seem a virtue; but at the centre of all the cloud of half-delusions there lies one certain fact: the sin that was at first a power, and then a desire, is now a resolution. It has grown into a strong youth, and has mastered the will.

¶ When I stride out to respond to temptation, when I close with its offer, that is the fatal step, and for that step I must render an account to God. To that step, to that choice, my will consents. Then my responsibility begins. I am not responsible for allurements; I am not responsible for appetites. I did not put that means of sin yonder; I did not make it the means of evil it is. Nor did I make this disordered state of desire within. But these are not the only things. I make up my mind to use these ill means to do ill deeds. I go and drink, I go and gamble, I go and commit sin, I go and wrong my neighbour. I make up my mind. It is my intention. I close with the offer, and I come out undone. I am responsible for that. I did it by my own intention, by my own act, choice, purpose, in obedience to the preference I put forth. That is sin.[1]

¶ James says the man is *drawn aside*. James conceives of him as occupied with his daily task, busily discharging the duties of his daily calling. While he is thus engaged, a craving for some unlawful or excessive gratification, for a gain that cannot be honestly secured, or an indulgence which cannot be taken soberly and in the fear of God, springs up within his mind. The craving haunts his mind, and takes form in it. He bends his regard on it, and is drawn towards it. At first, perhaps, his will is firm, and he refuses to yield to its attraction. But the craving is very strong; it touches him at his weak point. And when it comes back to him again and again, it swells and grows into what James calls a 'lust.' It is 'his *own* lust,' the passion most native to him, and most potent with such as he—the love of gain, or the love of rule, or the love of distinction, or some affection of a baser strain. It may be any one of these, but it is *his own*, that which is most special and

[1] J. W. Clayton, *The Genius of God*, 81.

[1] J. W. Clayton, *The Genius of God*, 82.

familiar with him. For a time he may resist its fascination; but ere long his work is laid aside, the claims of duty are neglected, the warnings of conscience unheeded. He has, indeed, no definite intention of abandoning the ways of duty and peace; he would be indignant with you were you to charge him with any such intention. He will be back in a moment. All he means is to get a nearer view of this strange, alluring visitor, to lift its veil, to see what it is like and for what intent it beckons him away. And so he takes his first step: he is *drawn aside* from the clear and beaten path of duty.[1]

4. And what comes next? The act, the deed itself. As the growing young man comes of age, and has his manhood recognized of other men, so the growing sin comes into its majority, and seals itself with a deed, and all men see its wickedness.

And so the sin is done, done as the man is done who has come into his majority, but not finished, as the man is not finished at twenty-one, with all his growth to grow and all his influence to exercise waiting for him. Power, desire, will, deed—they are all there, but then only begins the sin's full-grown life. We grow familiar with it in our recollection. By and by the very perception that it is a sin begins to fail. We begin to cheat ourselves and call it other names, darkness for light, and light for darkness; evil for good, and good for evil. Our sin has killed our real life; for this disgraced, demoralized, blinded struggle or apathy into which it has brought us is not life, but death. 'Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.'

¶ In the tragedy of Macbeth, these stages of temptation and sin ending in literal and spiritual death are depicted by a master hand. There is no more honoured or honourable soldier than the brave Macbeth returning victorious from the field of battle. But the weird sisters, emblems of the hellish instigation to which human nature is subject, must meet him on the blasted heath with their evil suggestions that one day he shall be king—the fatal poison that is to work his death. In the first stage the bare thought, the lust—this time of ambition and power—is aroused to activity. That is not sin. The witches met him in the hour of his temptation and tempted him, but that was not sin. It is when the next stage is reached that danger commences, when the bare thought has passed, as it did with Macbeth, into the 'strong imagination.' It is only a testimony to human frailty that the brave man listens unwillingly, and yet wonders if it be possible they speak the truth, and that one day he will be king. 'Would they had stayed,' he said, and he rehearsed in his imagination the imperial theme, picturing with vivid mind the glories of a throne, yet wondering too whether the supernatural soliciting were good or ill:

> If ill,
> Why hath it given me earnest of success,
> Commencing in a truth? I am Thane of Cawdor:
> If good, why do I yield to that suggestion
> Whose horrid image doth unfix my hair
> And make my seated heart knock at my ribs,
> Against the use of nature?

Alas for Macbeth in this strong temptation! One who should have been his better self proved more satanic than the witches, and when the man who was 'too full o' the milk of human kindness to catch the nearest way' was filled with terrible misgivings about murdering the innocent king, the woman at his side urged him on till first she won his consent and heard him say, 'I am settled, and bend up each corporal agent to this terrible feat,' and then saw him do the deed. First the temptation, then the rehearsal of the imperial theme, then the consent of the will and the crime. That is the history of every temptation that ends in sin.[1]

5. What then? Must every sin be finished? There is One who is Lord of man because He made man, and because He has occupied and redeemed to Himself our humanity by a

[1] S. Cox, in *The Expositor*, 4th ser. iv. 47.

[1] D. Fairweather, *Bound in the Spirit*, 45.

perfect human life; One who is Lord of sin because He has met it in personal struggle and conquered it. Only He can interrupt a sin so that it shall not be finished and cannot bring forth death. At any point in its history He can step in, and can so change the nature that the power of sin shall not open into the desire of sin; He can so chasten the desire that it shall never dare to impose itself on the will and grow into a resolution; He can even lay His hand on a resolution, and demand of it that it shall leave undone the deed it has resolved upon. But even beyond this, even when the sin is done, even then He can hinder it from being finished. When preventing grace has failed, restoring grace may still be powerful. First comes forgiveness, which is not simply the taking off of penalties. The soul forgiven is put beyond the reach of punishment by being taken out of the power of sin. The two must go together.

And then the past sin, what is done with that? It cannot be forgotten; it cannot be as if it had never been. But when Christ touches it, all is changed. When He has once forgiven it, it is all filled with the assurance of His love. It remains in the life as a power of caution, of watchfulness, of trust, of gratitude. It has become vital instead of deadly. It brings forth life, the life of a continual loving trust instead of death. It was on the wings of his forgiven sin that Simon Peter went through his long struggle of obedient gratitude up to everlasting life. It is a forgiven sin that makes the sinner a comforter of other tempted souls.

Master, what work hast thou for me,—
For me, who turn aside in shame
Before the eyes of my own blame?
Thou seest, Lord.

I see.
That shame for me thou shalt endure,
That thou mayst succour souls afraid,
Who would not dare to seek for aid
The mercilessly pure.

But must my heart forever show
These scars of unforgotten pain?
May it be never whole again?
Thou knowest, Lord.

I know.
Those scars I leave thee for a sign
That bleeding hearts may creep to rest
As on a mother's sheltering breast
On that scarred heart of thine.[1]

The Way of Sin.

Ja. i. 15.—'Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.'

THERE are three characteristics of sin which call for notice.

1. Sin tends to extend and propagate itself in the individual life and in the social life by suggestion and afterwards by force of habit. An act of body or of will, whether it arise from natural impulse or from external suggestion, tends to repetition unless good reason and sufficient will come into play against it. And the act is itself a suggestion, both to the doer himself and to anyone who sees or knows of it. Habits are soon formed, both of body and of mind, and though they do not determine action, they make action easier in one direction or another. They tend to create or strengthen a disposition. Happily there are good habits as well as bad habits. But an evil habit, which may be so much a habit that the man is hardly conscious of it, is a constant menace to the society of which he is a member. It may, by way of suggestion, strongly affect the more impressionable minds and create a drift which tends to lower the moral level of the whole society as such.

¶ The doctors recognise to-day a curious genus of people whom they call 'carriers.' A carrier is one who carries, not simply in his clothes, but in himself, a disease which does not in him become active, but which is liable to become active and serious in anyone whom he infects with it. These people have a strange immunity to certain diseases, and that

[1] Amelia J. Burr.

very immunity is a menace to the public, because such a man may be carrying, let us say, diphtheric germs in his throat, and while he does not develop diphtheria he may all unconsciously infect someone to whom he speaks. The great danger of the carrier is just that, being immune himself he is not aware of the deadly effects he is having upon other people. Clearly, if a man knows he is a carrier, he is in honour bound to take every possible precaution to prevent his happy immunity from becoming a public danger.

It has long ago been established that often the laws of nature may be traced in the world of spirit. There is a correspondence between the realms of physical substance and spiritual reality. In the moral sphere, just as in the physical, you may transmit a disease from which you are not yourself suffering.

Now it would be rank folly to say that a man is on the high-road to hell or is putting his soul in pawn just because he takes part in a sweep-stake or has a flutter on a horse. If a man has moral balance and has himself well in control, he may with impunity and immunity fling away his money into that bottomless pit, without of necessity developing a forked tail or finding that his feet are becoming cloven. To such a man the harmfulness of gambling never becomes active. You, for example, may find that this coquetting with chance is devoid of any very baneful effects upon your personality.

Precisely. It is just such a case as yours that is a menace to the community. Free from danger yourself, you may be a carrier of disease to someone else. Our common parlance has acknowledged that this coquetting with chance may become so malignant that it assumes the characteristics of a disease. Do we not speak of the Gambling Fever? There are people who are not so stable and well-poised as you. There are people to whom gambling is a danger beyond the telling; people who, once started on this track, will run amok. In them the fever betrays all its deadliest symptoms. And that fever, inoperative in you, you may transmit to them. You may go serenely on your way, having too much good sense ever to increase your stakes, or allow the mania to get a hold of you. But what about that silly chap at the next desk to yours in the office, a fellow lacking in ballast and judgment? He joined in the sweepstake for the Derby because he saw you doing it and fancied, therefore, that it would be all right. Now he has got the fever. He is running into debt with wily bookmakers, and has got into the clutches of the money-lenders. One of these days he will in desperation take an unauthorised loan—just for a day or two—of some of his employers' money. You know what will happen after that! . . .

Is it not along these same lines that we should regard the question of alcohol? Some of the best fellows in the world are those who drink in moderation, who have themselves always in check and never overdo it. But the days of hero-worship are not dead. Are there possibly young fellows in the office to whom you secretly are their beau-ideal, their standard of what is manly and admirable? Have you any guarantee that those who see a sanction in your procedure will be able to exercise the same restraint as you?

Often it is the moderate drinker, going happily on his way, without ever yielding to excess, who leaves on the trail behind him a hideous entail of bungled lives.

Here lies a challenge to all good men and true. For every one of us is potentially a carrier.[1]

2. Sin falls in with the natural tendency in man to drift, to follow the line of least resistance.

(1) There is in the world of Nature the downward, katabolic tendency, the inertia of matter, symbolized by the law of gravitation, and the law of life is one of constant active effort in the teeth of this tendency. The two are not ultimately antagonistic, for life can make use of the downward tendency for its purposes, but life maintains and enriches itself only by effort and endeavour in spite of the tendency to take things easily, by catching at advantage and concentrating energy

[1] Kennedy Williamson, *The Shining Traffic*, 221.

and intelligence on its purposes. Man must put aside sloth and ease of body and mind, and, warned by danger and stimulated by hope and the love of his fellows, must respond to the needs of the situation and to the call of the ideal of better things. All the world, with its suggested hopes of good and fears of ill, is full of inducements to endeavour. All the world, with its inertia and its drift, makes endeavour difficult and progress no necessary process but an enterprise and a task. Degeneration and death are easy. Inaction is all that is needed. This is the lesson of evolution.

(2) So also in the moral world. The unregulated natural impulses, whether tending towards positive self-seeking or towards negative indifference and sloth, constitute the material, as it were, of human character and require to be shaped, ordered, organized, in accordance with an ideal. Left to themselves or organized on a false or wrong ideal they bring disaster, whether from destructive activity or from inactivity and decay. Apart from spirit and the law of the spirit—whether we like to call it human or Divine it is the spirit of life with its ideal and its energy, stirring, shaping, organizing moralizing, human nature—there is a downward, katabolic tendency, which means ultimately spiritual death, *i.e.* death of the man's spirit to the human or Divine ideals and its energy. All spiritual life, all moral energy and power, consists in the active response of a spiritual being to the call of the ideal, to the categorical imperative of the moral law, to the good law and will of God, whichever way we like best to express to ourselves that first and ultimate obligation under which every man lives. Every advance is made in the teeth of the forces of moral inertia in a man's own spirit and in others.

¶ I had gone one Sunday afternoon to a meeting for men. The meeting was not greatly to my mind. I was not enamoured of the preacher's theme, far less did I like his method. But suddenly, in an urgent appeal for fine effort, he said, 'All great things lie *up* the stream.' It was enough. That was the meaning and the message of the meeting to me.

All else I have forgotten. I did not wish to remember it, and so I did not try. But this sentence riveted itself to my thought. It took hold of my heart and challenged its sympathetic hospitality. And from that day to this I have never been able to forget it, and I never wish to. Many and many a time, when the way is hard, when disenchantment works her enervation, when the conflict is bitter and defeat seems certain, I find myself muttering the familiar phrase, 'All great things lie *up* the stream.' It is a direction, an impulse, a challenge, a demand. It is like a very breath of God. It is as if our Lord Christ touched the soul. And when I see a man settling down into petty and premature satisfactions, when ease and comfort are doing their deadliest work, the thing becomes a bugle to my lips, a thing to awaken, to arouse, and to disturb. And when I see a young spirit scanning with inquisitive and wistful eyes the way that he shall take; when he seems hesitant as to whether he shall take the high way or fall into the path of undistinguished commonplace; when he can so easily submit to the tyranny of convention, or, in noble power, set it at proud defiance; when in an hour of vision he seems to falter before the long path, the steep ascent, the hard way, the far-off goal, I find myself whispering in his ear, 'All great things lie *up* the stream.' It is a light to the eyes, a compulsion to the heart; it leads, it inspires, it sustains.[1]

3. The third characteristic of sin is its tendency to cause pain and suffering. Whether we think of suffering as sin's punishment or not, and on whomsoever the suffering falls, it *does* fall. In one way or another, sooner or later but quite inevitably, sin does bring suffering in its train. There is nothing arbitrary or partial about it. It is a law, *the* law of Nature. And it is God's law. It expresses part of the truth of things, symbolizes the nature of sin in itself and in its consequences —consequences to the sinner and to others associated with him. It expresses also something in the nature of God Himself and His

[1] G. B. Austin, *Beautiful Gates in Life*, 97.

righteousness, His attitude towards sin, the absolute contradiction between Himself and it.

And the law is good. In the physical world pain is a great instrument of evolution, educating men and safeguarding them against things and actions dangerous to life before knowledge and moral self-control are sufficiently developed to keep men from unnecessary harm. So in the moral world, in man's weakness, it is good not only that many kinds of wrongdoing to which he is prone do obviously cause physical pain, but that all sin tends, at any rate in the long run, to bring disorganization, unhappiness, and misery into the individual life and into the social life. How else so well could free man have been taught from earliest days of moral infancy the desirability of obedience to the best law known, and also through all probation the absolute imperative of God's will of holy love? From the first simple physical pain, or other mark of displeasure, used by a parent to turn a child from an incipient bad habit, to the fear of spiritual disorder and alienation that reinforces the wavering loyalty of a much tried servant of God, the pains and sufferings of the world are among the experiences men have come to be thankful for in proportion as they have met them with courage and good will.

(1) Even the irregularity about the incidence of suffering, the obvious and frequent disproportionateness of suffering to guilt, which has most distressed men's minds so long as they have looked on all suffering as a mark of God's displeasure, even this has its advantage. It saves virtue from the slur that has often been cast upon it of being a mere selfish calculation of measurable pleasures and pains or a means of avoiding pain. Virtue undoubtedly does tend to lessen the suffering of the world. By combating all wrong-doing it combats the suffering that results from wrong-doing. And more than that, the nature of love is to spend itself in saving the loved from unnecessary suffering. So, if Jesus truly reveals the Father, works the holy love of God, the perfect sum of goodness; so, too, man's love, so far as he attains it, is ever at war with suffering. Only, the holier and wiser the love the more will moral good as an end be supreme over all other ends, and the fight against pain will be entirely secondary as compared with the fight against wrong. Especially in the good man's own case will he most willingly endure all sufferings if only God's purposes of holy love may be effected.

(2) And that other terrible aspect of the law of sin, the absolute certainty of someone sooner or later suffering as the result of sin, also has its advantage. If anything in the world can startle the dull conscience, pierce the hard heart, and waken its sense of responsibility, it is when the conviction comes home to a man with all the relentless inevitability of a law of nature, that his sin must bring suffering, not only to himself but perhaps to others tied to him in that strange solidarity of human society, perhaps by the tenderest ties, who may be innocent of all guilt, yet bound by reason of this solidarity, perhaps even because of love, to suffer by his sin.[1]

¶ I knew a man who led a woman astray. He was fast and evil then, but a year or two after he was changed, and became what he is —one of the most prominent men in the religious world. But through all his success and apparent blessings there was the stain and the shadow of that woman's life upon him. Only three people ever knew about it, and it was twenty years ago. He preached all through England and Scotland and Ireland in the hope, I fervently believe, that that woman might hear him and be saved. Every prayer he prayed, he prayed for her. Not long ago I was in London at a meeting which he was addressing, and after the meeting a woman walked up to him with bent head, weeping. I saw them alone as they stood. That was the woman he had searched for in the restitution of twenty years.[2]

[1] E. W. Johnson, *Suffering, Punishment and Atonement*, 121ff.

[2] *The Life of Henry Drummond*, 479.

A Difficult Verse.

Ja. i. 17.—'Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.'

This verse is very difficult.

In preparing that great edition of the New Testament in Greek which we know by the name of Westcott and Hort, the editors placed the utmost reliance upon two special manuscripts. When these two manuscripts agreed, their text was adopted. Once only did they agree and yet were set aside. It was in their spelling of the last word of James i. 17. As Hort expressed it, that was their 'solitary' blunder. It has since been shown, on excellent authority, that it is no blunder, but the correct text.

According to the Authorized Version this is the verse: 'Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.' How does the ordinary reader understand that? He is a little puzzled with the repetition of the word 'gift.' He does not see clearly why the gift should be called first 'good' and then 'perfect.' 'The Father of lights' is an expression with which he is not familiar, and he is not quite sure that he understands it. And the meaning of 'shadow of turning' at the end of the verse he takes to be 'the least trace of changing' or else it is altogether hidden from him. Still he thinks he understands what St. James in his own way wishes to say. God, who is the Giver of all the blessings of life, may be trusted to give them throughout life, because it is not in His nature to change.

Then comes the little knowledge which is a dangerous thing. Turning to the Revised Version the reader finds that there are two kinds of gift, for now he reads, 'Every good gift and every perfect boon.' He finds that 'variableness,' though it seems a better word for the character of God, is not so correct a translation as 'variation.' And he finds that he was all wrong in taking 'shadow of turning' to mean the least trace of changing. For the Revised Version has 'shadow that is cast by turning.'

The ordinary English reader is not alone in thinking that 'shadow of turning' means small amount of turning. That is how the Old Latin versions understood it (*modicum obumbrationis*); and not only the Old Latin versions, but also several of the early Greek commentators, and even a few modern translators, including the Authorized translators themselves. But it will not do. The Greek word never occurs in that sense.

The meaning of the whole verse is given by Alford (as he understands it) with his usual clearness: 'Every good gift (properly, *act of giving*) and every perfect gift (properly, *thing given;* but we cannot express the two by two words in English) descendeth from above, from the Father of the lights (it seems now generally agreed that by the lights here is meant the *heavenly bodies*, and by Father the Creator, Originator, as in Job xxxviii. 28, '*Who is the father of the rain?*' Being this, being the Father of those glorious fountains of light, and thus purer and clearer than they all, it cannot be that He should tempt to evil. Our very life, renewed in Christ, is of His begetting, and we are a first-fruit of His new world), with (*chez*, in the presence of) whom there is no change (none of that uncertainty of degree of light which we see in the material heavenly bodies, but which is not in God their Creator) or shadow (*a shadow*, the dark mark of shadow, the result of being overshadowed, and cast from any object) of turning (arising from turning —from that *revolution* in which the heavens are ever found: by means of which the moon turns her dark side to us, in a constant state of *change, and shadow of turning:* by means of which the moon is eclipsed by the shadow of the earth, and the sun by the body of the moon, or, if you will, though this is hardly so likely to have been in view, is hidden from us during the night. From all these God, the Father of lights, is free; as 1 John i. 5. "God is light and in him is no darkness at all").'

Alford says that we have not English words with which to distinguish the act of giving from the thing given. And immediately after he had said it, the Revisers declared that we have, and offered 'gift' and 'boon.' But Alford was right. A gift is a boon and a boon is a gift; and these two words do not carry us the very least way towards the true distinction. Listen to Plumptre: 'The two nouns are different in the Greek, the first expressing the abstract act of giving, the second the gift actually bestowed. The perfection of the one flows from the goodness of the other. The "perfect gift" carries our thoughts beyond all temporal blessings which, though good, have yet an element of incompleteness, to the greater gifts of righteousness and peace and joy; the gift, *i.e.* of the Holy Spirit, which is the crowning gift of all.'

No doubt that runs in the direction of homiletics. But the distinction is there. Hort also insists upon it; and in the adjectives he finds that, while 'good' expresses 'the character of the gifts, derived from the Giver, "perfect" expresses the completeness of their operation when they are not misused.' Huther warns us against understanding by the one the gift of nature or the present life, and by the other the gift of grace or the future life.

It is now generally agreed, says Alford, that 'the lights' (observe the *the*) are the heavenly bodies. That is so. Yet Plumptre thinks otherwise. 'The plural' ('lights'), he says, 'is used to express the thought that light in all its forms, natural (as in the "great lights" of Ps. cxxxvi. 7), intellectual, spiritual, is an efflux from Him "who is light, and in whom is no darkness at all."' And Hort agrees to this extent that, while he believes James calls God the Father (that is, the Creator) of the luminaries of the sky, he used such a word as would include all lights, and that invisible as well as visible. Then Knowling believes that 'James would not only remind his readers that if the lights of heaven, sun, moon, and stars, brought such blessing to men, how much more He who made them; but he would again enforce the truth that if God was the source of all light, then we cannot refer sin to Him, the darkness which blinds the eyes of the soul and of the understanding.'

But all this is introductory. The difficulty of the verse is in the end of it: 'with whom can be no variation, neither shadow that is cast by turning,' as the Revised Version has it.

What is the 'shadow that is cast by turning'? What is it that turns? 'In considering the phrase,' says Bennett, 'we must, of course, dismiss from our minds our modern knowledge of astronomy, *e.g.* of the revolution of the earth on its axis, and its motion through an orbit round the sun. "Shadow cast by turning" could only mean to the readers the darkness in which the earth is plunged by the diurnal revolution or "turning" of the sun and moon round the earth—a special instance of "variation."'

Beyond that none of the commentators have been able to go. The older men took it more astronomically than the modern see their way to do. Bishop Jebb's translation is 'with whom there is no parallax or tropical shadow.' And this is Doddridge's paraphrase: 'The sun itself is but a feeble image of His glory, *with whom there is no variableness*, nor so much as any *shadow of turning;* whereas the sun is continually varying, and has no sooner arrived at its meridian, but it begins to descend to the west, or to its summer height, but it verges towards the winter again; causing the direction of the shadows it occasions proportionally to vary.'

This again is a trifle homiletical. Worse than that, it gives a precise sense to a word which was used quite generally. Mayor's paraphrase is very different. The meaning of the passage he takes to be: 'God is alike incapable of being changed by the action of others.' And now we come to the discovery.

We have already seen that when Hort wrote his great Introduction in defence of his two choice manuscripts, he found that in one place only did they agree to go wrong, and that place is our verse. How did they go wrong? They gave the last word in the genitive instead of the nominative. Hort had various in-

genious conjectures to account for the blunder, which do not concern us now. For it is no blunder.

Professor Hardy Ropes, in his commentary on this Epistle, gives what he believes to be a 'strictly new' solution of the problem.

In what respect is it new? It is new in this that it takes the alternative conjunction ἤ as the definite article ἡ and keeps the last word in the genitive. This does not give a different sense. Of that there is no need. The translation is: 'with whom is none of the variation that belongs to (consists in, is observed in) the turning of the shadow.' But it vindicates the judgment of Westcott and Hort in their reliance upon their two choice manuscripts, and that in the most agreeable and conclusive manner.[1]

¶ The shorter the tree the wider the welcoming shade.

This is the meaning of the greatest saying of maternal solicitude in Africa, 'Where the shade is deepest,' says the mother, 'there it is I lay my child to rest while working in the fields.' Here, also, we make a sure find in the elucidation of that tough old text: 'With whom is no variableness neither *shadow of turning*.' The Revisers saw something vague here and rendered it 'shadow cast by turning,' and they were vaguely right. But they did not know that for many degrees of African latitude the words for shadow, *chimfule* or *chinshingwa*, are only the verb 'to turn' in noun form. Therefore 'the shadow' is the notorious 'turner' because its daily direction is a turning from west to east, the morning shadow being diametric to the evening one. Had that mother trusted too long to the *morning* shade sheltering her cherub, she would soon hear baby awaking to the fierce rays of the sun that was there all the time, only the elusive shadow deserted her darling. Thus 'with whom is no variableness neither shadow cast by turning' is a picture of the God who never deserts or deceives us.[2]

[1] cf. *The Expository Times*, xxvii. 338ff.
[2] Dan Crawford, *Back to the Long Grass*, 26.

God's Gifts.

Ja. i. 17.—'Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above.'

When too weak to dwell on those scientific inquiries which had been the work of his life, Professor Clerk Maxwell's mind continued active about many of his favourite studies. He remarked one day that he had been wondering why the lines in Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice* about the harmony that is in mortal souls (repeating the whole passage) should have been put in the mouth of such a frivolous person as Lorenzo. At another time, when continuous conversation had become impossible, and he had been lying for some time with closed eyes, he looked up and repeated the verse. 'Every good and every perfect gift is from above,' etc., and then added (quoting the Greek), 'Do you know that that is a hexameter? I wonder who composed it?'[1]

1. The fundamental conception of God is that of the Giver. And this is the conception that the Bible gives us of God the Father. He is the Source of all things. To Him, in the first place, all created things owe the gift of existence. Though Paul tells the Colossians that by the Son were all things created that are in heaven and that are in earth; all things created by Him and for Him; and again tells the Corinthians that to us Christians there is one Lord Jesus Christ by whom are all things; yet he also teaches that there is but one God the Father, of whom are all things. So that in his doctrine the Father is still the origin of the existence of all. If the Son created all things, yet He created them by His Father's power and will, and never is it said of Him that He is the original source of their existence. That belongs to God the Father only.

¶ In G. F. Watts' picture of 'The All-pervading' the immeasurable expanse of space is pervaded by a Divine Element, which Watts depicts as a figure with great encircling wings,

[1] *The Life of James Clerk Maxwell*, 409.

seated and holding in its lap a globe, representing the stellar universe. Nothing could be more impressive and awe-inspiring than the sense of the overwhelming vastness and ubiquity of this Divine Element throughout the world which is given in this picture. It penetrates to the essence of everything; it holds everything from the largest to the smallest within its mighty grasp. It is a sublime conception that a Personality is seated on the throne of universal empire.[1]

2. To go a step further, as God our Father is the Source of all existence, so also is He the Source of all happiness. All pleasure is superadded to existence and comes from Him, revealing His nature still further. For there was no need when He created us that He should have made us capable of pleasure at all. Existence is possible without it. No doubt, now that it is created, it plays a large part in maintaining the existence to which it is attached. No doubt, as things are in the struggle for existence, any living thing which was not upheld by the pleasures which occasionally make existence happy, would probably soon perish. If there were absolutely no pleasure in living, or in the functions of life, or in the various processes by which life is maintained, many living things would give up the efforts by which life is kept from perishing and would disappear. That, however, is taking things as they now are. But, so far as we can see, things need not have been as they are. Nature might have gone on without there being any such thing as pleasure at all. And it is precisely this creation of pleasure which first makes us feel that the creation is due to a living person and not to a dead mechanical law. The regularity and beautiful order of Nature does not supply us with a higher thought than that of a piece of clockwork. Mere machinery might be as orderly, as complex, as wonderfully fitted together part by part. But the creation of creatures capable of happiness, and the gift of happiness to the creatures so made capable of it—this points to something more than machinery, this speaks not only to the brain but to the heart, this is the first thing that tells not only of the Creator's supremacy in intelligence, but of His goodness, of His love, of His delight in contemplating the happiness of living beings. A Being that finds pleasure in giving pleasure must be good; for that is the very definition of goodness.

Lord God, how full our cup of happiness!
We drink and drink—and yet it grows not less;
But every morn the newly risen sun
Finds it replenished, sparkling, over-run!
Hast Thou not given us raiment, warmth, and meat,
And in due season all earth's fruits to eat?—
Work for our hands and rainbows for our eyes,
And for our souls the wings of butterflies?—
A father's smile, a mother's fond embrace,
The tender light upon a lover's face?—
The talk of friends, the twinkling eye of mirth,
The whispering silence of the good green earth?—
Hope for our youth, and memories for age,
And psalms upon the heavens' moving page?[1]

3. And yet, once more, as God is the Giver of happiness, so is He finally the Giver of righteousness or holiness. This is His last and highest character. This is His last and highest gift. Righteousness or holiness differs no doubt from all other gifts, in that the receiver is necessarily not a passive receiver. The gift of existence implies absolutely no action whatever in the thing created. Plainly enough, the thing not yet created cannot have any kind of share in its own creation. And the same may be said of all natural capacities, whether moral or intellectual, whether good dispositions or clever minds: all these are in the first instance given without any action whatever on the part of the receiver. We are quite passive, and God bestows on us life, and

[1] H. Macmillan, *The Life-Work of G. F. Watts, R.A.*, 191.

[1] G. Thomas, *Poems*, 14.

the power of thought, and various natural graces of character and various faculties of mind, and we have nothing to do with the matter; simply we are so made. So, again, pleasure is often given without any co-operation whatever in him who receives and enjoys the pleasure. God gives happiness in many ways without our having done anything whatever to procure it. Some pleasures, no doubt, we get for ourselves, and God, it may be said, does not actually give them; He puts them within our reach. But many pleasures He gives out and out. The bodily enjoyment of health and high spirits; the pleasure of fine weather and bright sunshine; the pleasure of seeing whatever is beautiful; many pleasures of society—these are given to us while we are quite passive. We are so entirely passive that we can hardly be said to receive them; rather we enjoy them. But this last and best gift of righteousness, the gift of a conscientious spirit, of an obedient will, of a religious and devout heart, this gift is never given without of necessity implying that there is some action of our own. And hence it often seems to us that it is not so much to be received as won; that is not a gift but rather a reward. But this is a mistake. The holiness of heart which makes men the children of God is as much a gift as any other gift can be; nay, in one sense it is more truly a gift, because most other gifts He may send to us by indirect means; but this peculiarly comes from Him, because it is in reality a gift of Himself.

So, accordingly, our Lord declares that no man can come to Him unless the Father draw him. So Paul perpetually speaks of the righteousness of God in such a way that we cannot say whether he means the righteousness whereby God Himself is righteousness, or the righteousness which He requires in His servants, or the righteousness which He alone can give and He alone does give. For indeed he means all three. So the Second Epistle of Peter speaks of Christians as partakers of the Divine nature. So John declares that every man that doeth righteousness is born of God. So James teaches that every good gift and every perfect gift is from above.[1]

[1] F. Temple, *Rugby Sermons*, iii. 9ff.

¶ Many serious-minded men take an infinitude of pains to produce a true holiness for themselves out of their own corrupt hearts; squeezing, all the time, oil out of a flint. Whereas, the true way, and the only possible way, for them to get the mastery over their indwelling sin is by receiving into their hearts a new spiritual nature out of the fulness of that new spiritual nature that is in Christ.[1]

¶ There never was such a tragedy as Margaret Fuller's story—the sadder and sterner, because so much of the ridiculous was mixed up with it, and because she could bear anything better than to be ridiculous. It was such an awful joke, that she should have resolved—in all sincerity, no doubt—to make herself the greatest, wisest, best woman of the age. And to that end she set to work on her strong, heavy, unpliable, and, in many respects, defective and evil nature, and adorned it with a mosaic of admirable qualities, such as she chose to possess; putting in here a splendid talent and there a moral excellence, and polishing each separate piece, and the whole together, till it seemed to shine afar and dazzle all who saw it. She took credit to herself for having been her own Redeemer, if not her own Creator; and, indeed, she was far more a work of art than any of Mozier's statues. But she was not working on an inanimate substance, like marble or clay; there was something within her that she could not possibly come at, to re-create or refine it; and, by and by, this rude old potency bestirred itself, and undid all her labour in the twinkling of an eye.[2]

The Gift of Art.

Ja. i. 17.—'Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above.'

Of all the writings in the New Testament, there is no Epistle so essentially modern as the Epistle of St. James. He is interested in just those social questions which to-day

[1] A. Whyte, *The Spiritual Life*, 146.
[2] J. Hawthorne, *Nathaniel Hawthorne and His Wife*, i. 261.

interest us. He discusses, for instance, the duties of employers to employed. He even seems to give rules about free seats in Church. Above all, his Epistle is permeated with that love of natural beauty which characterizes modern literature, modern poetry, and modern art. Paul in his travelling must have passed through many of the fairest scenes of the world. In Europe and in Asia he must have looked upon mountains and rivers and seas; but he never stops to tell us one word about the snowy mountains, or the winding rivers, or the changeful beauty of the sea. But with James it is quite otherwise. The spray upon a wave, the flower that fades at noon, and mist that hangs above a river—all these things have lessons for him. Open his Epistle, and almost at the outset you have him describing a man who says his prayers without faith. What is he like? He is like to the surge of the sea, driven by the wind and tossed. 'Let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord. A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.' In the very next paragraph he describes to us a rich man who would be clothed in purple and fine linen, and who would fare sumptuously every day. To what does James liken him? He is like to the flower of the grass: he shall pass away. The sun arises with the scorching wind, and withers the grass; and the flower falls, and the grace of the fashion of it perishes: so also shall the rich man fade away in his goings. James asks the question which is asked by every generation of mankind, 'What is life?' And the answer which he gives to the question is this: it is like the mist that hangs for a few hours in the morning above the river in the valley, and then, when the sun is up, swiftly vanishes away. This essentially modern writer, looking on the book of Nature, finds continually lessons about God.

For God as the perfectly good is not only Absolute Truth, and Absolute Holiness, but also Absolute Beauty. He is the Source, the Author, the Giver of all beautiful things and qualities. All the beauties of earth and sea and sky, of life and mind and spirit, are rays from His beauty. The powers by which they are perceived are conferred by Him. The light in which they are seen is His light. As Beauty no less than as Power, as Life, as Truth, as Love, as Holiness, He is ever giving, ever giving good gifts, ever giving Himself, ever revealing Himself; for His giving of Himself is His revealing of Himself, and His revealing of Himself is His giving of Himself, whether it be in the fragrance of flowers and the songs of birds, or in the inspired thoughts and sanctified affections of men, or in the incarnation and atonement of Him who was the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person.

1. How literally and incessantly He bestows His gifts of beauty! And how good and perfect these gifts are! The immeasurable depths of space are strewn with stars beautiful in their colours, motions, and groupings. There is no painter like the sun, no brush like his rays. The sky is ever changing, so as to produce scene after scene, picture after picture, glory after glory. The successions of the seasons and the alternations of day and night bring with them heavenliest visions. Innumerable are the varieties of colour, of sound, and of motion which please sense and heart and mind. The bleakest parts of the earth, the loneliest nooks of the forest, the thinnest crevices of the rocks, are found adorned by flowers of exquisite grace. The tiniest creatures in the depths of the sea are moulded and tinted with an inimitable precision and delicacy.

And the beauties of the material and animal worlds are surpassed by those of the mental and moral worlds—those displayed in the workings of human affection, in the movements of human thought, in the experiences of human life, in the scenes of human history. Wherever sympathy and generosity find expression, wherever there are traces of sorrow rightly borne or of the conquest of the spirit over the flesh, wherever personal worth or Divine grace makes itself visible, wherever there are actions with true human interest, pathos, or significance in them, there are

beauties which the adequately refined and cultured judgment will pronounce higher than any presented by the qualities and combinations of matter.

Beauty has been scattered around us with so bountiful a hand that there is no need to travel to a distance to find it. It is in all places, on all faces, within all lives. It is on the surface almost everywhere; it is buried everywhere. To see it requires only the opening of an eye that has a soul behind it.

¶ I have been reading *The Butterfly Man*. And here, in the early part of the book, is a scene in which a child and a criminal take part. Mary Virginia shows John Flint a pasteboard box. It contains a dark-coloured and rather ugly grey moth with his wings turned down.

'You wouldn't think him pretty, would you?' asked the child.

'No,' replied John Flint disappointedly, 'I shouldn't!'

Mary Virginia smiled, and, picking up the little moth, held his body, very gently, between her finger tips. He fluttered, spreading out his grey wings; and then John saw the beautiful pansy-like underwings, and the glorious lower pair of scarlet velvet, barred and bordered with black.

'I got to thinking,' said the girl, thoughtfully, lifting her clear and candid eyes to John Flint's, 'I got to thinking, when he threw aside his plain grey cloak and showed me his lovely underwings, that he's like some people. You couldn't be expected to know what was underneath, could you? So you pass them by, thinking how ordinary and uninteresting and ugly they are, and you feel rather sorry for them—because you don't know. But if you once get close enough to touch them—why, then you find out! You only think of the dust-coloured outside, and all the while the underwings are right there, waiting for you to find them! Isn't it wonderful and beautiful? And the best of it all is, it's true!'[1]

2. But God not only gives objects of beauty in inexhaustible profusion. He also gives power to see beauty, capacity to enjoy it, ability to express by various means and in various forms the visions of beauty vouchsafed and the feelings which they elicit. He implants, that is to say, in human nature those elements, emotions, and aptitudes which are the roots of art with all its branches and developments. He bestows them on all men; and on those whom He destines to serve Him as artists He bestows them in an exceptional measure. They are among the common and essential characteristics of human nature—features of the Divine image in that nature—yea, that nature itself as receptive and reflective of the beauty revealed by God. Artists are, indeed, God's elect children, but Divine election is only the election of some special privilege for the greatest good of all. Were not lower endowments the same in kind given to men in general, the artist's influence would have narrow and impassable limits, and his mission among his fellows would be restricted to action on the class or caste which least needed his aid. As it is, while God has given with special graciousness to him, He has also given to all, so that the true field of the artist's influence is 'the world,' and it is only owing to the want of the appropriate culture or the positive degradation of human nature that his public is not all minkind.

3. Seeing that beauty and art are good and perfect gifts of God, things of Divine sacredness and of Divine excellence, they are to be treated as such, to be reverenced and valued, to be cherished and cultivated. They ought to be so treated by all, and all will find abundant reward in gratefully, wisely, and justly appreciating them. In a world like ours, where there is so much to depress, to debase, and sadden life, it is a vast misfortune that anyone should not have all the avenues of his soul as open as possible to whatever tends to elevate, purify, and brighten existence, to give serenity to the mind and peace to the heart, and to reveal God in any of His aspects. But, of course, wherever there is special privilege there is special obligation.

[1] F. W. Boreham, *Rubble and Roseleaves*, 131.

(1) The artist is specially bound to receive those gifts of God's goodness, those aptitudes of his own nature, which have relation to the discernment and realization of beauty, with a grateful and loyal heart. He is bound jealously to guard them from all contamination and perversion, faithfully to improve and develop them, nobly to exercise and use them. He is bound to resist all seductions and temptations which would make his work unworthy of his high calling—less thorough, less sincere, less truthful and significant, less fair and elevating than it ought to be. More susceptible, perhaps, than other men to the show and appearance of things, the lusts of the eye, the world and the flesh, he must be ready and resolute to sacrifice all semblances without reality, all charms and pleasures which entice him from the pursuit of the beauty which is a joy for ever. He must forgo all cheap popularity, all easy triumphs, all short routes to fame or wealth.

¶ When Thackeray knew that his end was near, he was visited by an intimate friend —Mr. Synge—who was leaving England for some years.

'I want to tell you,' said Thackeray, 'that I shall never see you again. I feel that I am doomed. I know that this will grieve you; but look in that book, and you will find something that, I am sure, will please and comfort you.'

The 'something' was a written prayer in which he prayed that he might never write a word inconsistent with the love of God or the love of man; that he might never propagate his own prejudices or pander to those of others; that he might always speak the truth with his pen, and that he might never be actuated by love of greed.[1]

In after days, when grasses high
O'er-top the stone where I shall lie,
Though ill or well the world adjust
My slender claim to honoured dust,
I shall not question nor reply.
I shall not see the morning sky,
I shall not hear the night-wind sigh,
I shall be mute, as all men must
In after days!

But yet, now living, fain were I
That someone then should testify,
Saying 'He held his pen in trust
To Art, not serving shame or lust.'
Will none? . . . Then let my memory die
In after days![1]

[1] F. W. Boreham, *A Casket of Cameos*, 215.

(2) The artist has to accomplish an important social mission. Art does not exist merely for the advantage and enjoyment of the artist. Like everything else it may be perverted to selfish ends, but the perversion denaturalizes and debases it, for it is essentially a social thing, meant for the good of man as man. The charm of it is not lessened by being shared, but is the better enjoyed for being enjoyed in common. The only appropriate soil or medium of it is one of sympathy, love, brotherliness. Its ends are not individual and class ends, but human and universal. Its goodness and perfectness as God's gift is seen in its fitness to be to all men, even to the humblest and the poorest, an enlarger of the range of thought, a refiner of the feelings, a source of impulse and inspiration in work, a soother of sorrow and giver of joy, a revealer of the invisible and spiritual.

The social importance of art few, perhaps, adequately realize. Consider its most direct and obvious function—to give pleasure of a pure and special kind—pleasure which leaves no sting behind, but, on the contrary, evokes good feelings, and strengthens for good works. Is there not in that motive enough to stimulate to his best any artist who loves his brother men, and wishes to see them happier and better? Is the diffusing of pure happiness not a good and godlike work? But art exists not merely to gratify our senses, and our minds and hearts through our senses, but to educate them, to give them increased power and delicacy, to renew and regenerate them. Art, through the

[1] Austin Dobson.

work of artists, is meant to do for mankind in general that service which Wordsworth says his sister had done for him—

> She gave me eyes, she gave me ears;
> And humble cares, and delicate fears;
> A heart, the fountain of sweet tears,
> And love, and thought, and joy.

(3) Finally, the artist has not only to cultivate the gifts within him, and therewith serve his fellow-men, but he has also therewith to glorify God. He is God's debtor, and he ought to be God's minister. As both all beauty and all power to see and to reproduce it come from God, the artist may justly feel that his whole professional life is occupied with the things of God. Even if not cultivating some department of what is termed sacred art, he must realize that art is essentially sacred, the pursuit of it essentially a Divine priesthood and ministry, and that his professional life ought to be, throughout the whole extent of it, a consecrated life, a life lived within God's life, a hallowing of God's Name, an advancing of God's Kingdom, a doing of God's will.

The Name of God is one which includes beauty as well as truth and righteousness, and will therefore never be fully hallowed without the efforts of art. The true and the good can never be perfected until they are permanently wedded to the beautiful and the whole of life is transfigured into forms of beauty, and until then the Kingdom of God cannot have fully come. The will of God is not a merely cold and stern physical and moral law, but one which lacks no beauty or attraction, which 'wears the Godhead's most benignant face,' and it cannot be rightly conceived until art has so revealed it.

¶ How fortunate I was in being born with a desire. To paint landscapes was stronger with me than food, drink, friendships, sport, sweethearts, and other pleasures.

My first stage was simple and regular. I painted—for love. I studied for love. Love of my work shaped me into a young god striding through morning freshness. As I never exhibited pictures, and as since my student days I have never visited exhibitions, the pangs of competition and jealousy did not assail me. But we are so designed that every individual has his private, particular and peculiar temptations, subtly suited to his temperament. Their subtlety is sometimes almost unbelievably apt and disguised. It looks like a butterfly: it is really a vulture.

My temptation glided towards me in the guise of doubts and fears, which quickly developed into depression. For I had begun to ask myself why I painted pictures—to what end. You see, the first intensity of desire for self-expression, which acts and doesn't reason, was leaving me. I had to seek a substitute for enthusiasm.

Always, deep in my heart, I had been aware that mere pleasure and profit in work was insufficient. There must be a purpose, transcending self, and working towards an object which, in human phraseology, may be described as—doing God's will. Were my little landscapes doing that?

That question drove me into inertia. I could not work. I could paint no more landscapes until I had decided, in some way or another, that they were doing God's will, and illuminating the road for some of my fellow-creatures.

The awakening came to me one day in a flash, but analysis has since told me that the flash was but the spark ignited of my metaphysical preparations. I saw in a flash how this command to do God's will could be accommodated to my landscape painting. I, in my small way as landscape painter, could try to remind people of Eternal Beauty.

I could remind my fellow-creatures of the original beauty which man inherited, from which he has fallen away, to which he must eventually return, because the love of God, which is beauty, as it is everything else that is beautiful, wills this return. All life is but a wandering to find home, and the landscape painter lures the wanderer back by reminding him of the beauty which is his birthright. This he can do, even if it be in the tongue of the nursery: he can re-state the imagination of God.

So I was happy again. I had refound the road. My art had a purpose.

Then happened what so often happens when a man has found himself through himself. Confirmation of my discovery was given to me. In the 'Note-Books of Francis Thompson,' that poet, that seer, I found this illuminating passage:

'The world—the Universe—is a fallen world. When people try to understand the Divine plans they forget that everything is not as it was designed to be. And with regard to any given thing you have first to discover, if you can, how far it is as it was meant to be. That should be precisely the function of poetry—to see and restore the Divine idea of things, freed from the disfiguring accidents of their Fall.'

That, also, should be precisely the function of landscape painting—to see and restore the Divine idea of things, freed from the disfiguring accidents of their Fall.

So I took up my brushes again, and have never since doubted that in painting for Him, not for myself, I am doing His Will. In which is peace.[1]

¶ In Dame Nellie Melba's 'Melodies and Memories' there is a story of her reception by Marion Crawford, the well-known novelist.

One afternoon, when I had sung to him, writes Melba, I noticed that the tears were streaming down his face. I felt embarrassed, and, in order to give him time to recover, I suggested lightly that perhaps he might care to write in my autograph book. He looked at me strangely for a moment, and then said, 'I wonder if you would understand what I should like to write?'

'Let me see,' I said. And as I bent over his shoulder I saw he had written, 'I believe in the resurrection of the dead.'

I don't think I have been more thankful for my gift of song than on that occasion.

[1] C. L. Hind, *The Invisible Guide*, 134.

The Father of Lights.

Ja. i. 17.—'Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights.'

'THE Father of lights.' There can be little doubt that the primary reference is to the lights of the natural world, those lights of which we read in the first chapter of Genesis. But this reference, though primary, is only a passing reference. The general subject of the passage is the life of man, especially the Christian, with its lights and its shadows. And inasmuch as the lights and shadows of Nature are the universally recognized emblems of the lights and shadows of life, the mind readily passes from the one sense of the word to the other. When God is spoken of as the 'Father of lights,' then, the mind, after glancing for a moment at the lights of the natural world, should pass to the other, and rest upon the thought of God as Father of the lights, as distinguished from the shadows, of the spiritual world; the Author of the good, as distinguished from the evil, in human life and experience.

¶ On the night of Good Friday I looked over the Bay to the East. A pale light shone at the masthead of a steamer; a red light burned at the end of the pier; beyond, far away, a revolving light near the Needles sent its intermittent rays across the waters. Above, the full moon lit the heavens and cast a long path of twinkling light across the bay; and beneath her, like a rich jewel on Diana's bosom, hung a planet. In the zenith was Charles' Wain, and the three horses pointed down to Arcturus in the soft haze of the East. He is the Father of all these lights, the light of the homing ship, the light of warning and direction on pier and headland, the light of the heavens, whether of wheeling planets or of constant stars. On the following morning the rejoicing sun stood where the moon had been the evening before. Of this Light also He is the Father. The interchanging lights of heaven and the waxing or the waning lights of earth, are His. There are the lights which

grow unto a perfect day; there are the lights which wage a fluctuating battle with darkness; there are the swift radiances which leave a memory, the lightnings of truth; He is the Father of them all.[1]

1. Let us look at the application which the context suggests. The idea is that God is continually pouring out good influences upon men, just as the sun is continually pouring light and heat upon the earth. The idea of continuity is rather lost in our Version. The word 'cometh' in the original is not the present tense alone, but the present tense and the present participle combined, and the meaning is 'keeps coming and coming.' All good and perfect gifts keep coming in a perpetual stream, just as light and warmth keep coming and coming in a perpetual stream from the sun.

Yet light and heat are very variable on the earth's surface. There is much darkness and much cold. Why? The variability is not in the sun, but always at or near the surface of the earth itself—from clouds that have risen up from below and intercepted the light; from some vast mountain range which casts a deep shadow, and from its icy summit sends down chilly blasts on those who dwell beneath. Or, the cause may be simply the turning away of the earth from the sun. Remember, it is always the earth that turns away from the sun, never the sun that turns away from the earth. It may be only a partial turning away, as in the winter season, when the sun is far down from the meridian, and consequently storms and fogs prevail, and the verdure of summer disappears. Or it may be a turning away altogether, such as results in the darkness of night, or such as is found in those high altitudes where the night lasts on and on, until the whole land is locked in the icy embrace of death.

In the same way we may often trace darker experiences of life to influences that originate in and around ourselves: clouds of unbelief, mountain ranges of sin. Or we are in darkness simply because we have turned away from the 'Father of lights,'—turned away, it may be in part, so that He is no longer in the meridian, and winter influences are about us; or it may be altogether, so that, like the people in the Arctic regions, we are left under the power of darkness. But our variableness and the shadows which are the result of our turning away from Him do not affect the great and blessed truth that He is the 'Father of lights, with whom there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning,' and that all good and perfect gifts keep coming and coming from Him, flowing out in a perpetual stream from His great heart of love, and from the infinite treasury of His grace.

¶ I awoke . . . and saw the dark shadow of a Triangle on the Morning-lighted ceiling and wondered . . . until I found that it was the shadow of a suspended lamp. The lamp itself bore no likeness to a triangle; but I could see how the arrangement of supporting brasses and interlacing cords composed a whole, the shadow of which was, certainly, the one I saw.

And then, the meaning seemed to dawn upon us—a meaning but dimly grasped; yet this:—the shadow of the triangle has been cast across the Light of the things that have been revealed to us, by the way in which we have arranged our lamp. The morning has come; and the lamp that was before a light now casts a shadow that, in some strange fashion, assumes a form that the lamp had never claimed when burning through the hours of the dark. And this conception troubles us and many are the questions that contend. We are not single enough to accept the truth that it is the machinery of our making and the supporters of the out-burnt lamp that cause the shadow as it now appears.

When I arose and drew aside the curtain, there was no shadow in the fuller Light.[1]

2. We have been dwelling on the thought of God as the 'Father of lights' in its reference to good and evil influences. Let us now think of its application to pleasant and painful experiences. It is true in the region of

[1] R. F. Horton in *The Christian World*, April 28, 1910.

[1] Eblana, *Elemental Drifts*, 12.

joy and sorrow, as well as in that of temptation, that God is the Father of lights, of lights only. We cannot deny, indeed, that it is He who sends us our sorrows as well as our joys. But in a very different way. He sends us our blessings with all His heart. He keeps sending blessings direct from His gracious hand, which is always open liberally to supply His creatures' wants. Moreover, He doth not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men.

Many of our afflictions can be seen to come, not directly from God, but indirectly because of our sins, which intercept the light that otherwise would always stream upon us. Often, too, we may look upon God's dealing with us as a shading of the light from our weak eyes; and surely He is none the less the Father of lights that He sometimes tempers His rays to our weakness. Then it sometimes happens that what seems to us darkness is not really dark. We see as it were the under side of the cloud, which is turned towards earth and away from the sun, and it seems very dark. But if we could look upon the upper side of it—and we do sometimes discover a little fringe—the silver or the gold lining as we call it—we should see it all radiant with heavenly glory.

¶ Some time ago I had the opportunity of seeing a very splendid sight. It was what the Swiss call the *Nebel Meer*, or cloud sea. I was on the top of the Faulhorn, and while it was perfectly clear towards the high mountains, on the side of the plains there was one continuous sea of cloud beneath, stretching away to the farthest verge of the horizon. But seen from a height above, and out of a heaven that was dazzling in its brightness, that sea of cloud was a sea of glory! So would it be on the very darkest, dreariest day if only we could rise high enough to look down on the clouds from above. So will it be with us on earth, in proportion as we rise together with Christ and sit with Him in heavenly places.[1]

[1] J. Monro Gibson, *A Strong City*, 81.

The Father of Lights.

Ja. i. 17.—'The Father of lights.'

All careful readers of St. James' Epistle must be struck with the many original expressions which it contains. We have one of the most memorable in the words before us—'the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.' As we all know, light is used in Scripture, especially in the writings of St. John, as an emblem of what God is—'This is the message which we have heard from him and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.' What is peculiar to our text is that He is called 'the Father of lights.' We may take the expression in its widest application as denoting all kinds of light. There is material light, intellectual light, moral light, and spiritual light.

1. *Material light* is that familiar element of Nature which yet never ceases to be an object of wonder. Our men of science have much to say about it. They analyse it, they show the different colours of which each ray is composed, they tell us of the millions of miles it travels through space, and how, from the most distant stars, it arrives at our earth by means of the all-surrounding ether. Such information, valuable as it is, does not, however, satisfy our minds. We are filled with curiosity about the origin of light. How did it spring into existence? At the last resort we come back to the words of the Old Book, 'and God said, Let there be light, and there was light.' He is the Father of light. It owes its origin to the Being who called it forth. He gave it to meet the eyes that were afterwards to be created. We know nothing in the natural world more perfect. We cannot conceive anything more perfect. The great poets of the world, such as Dante and Milton, when they want to picture the perfect state hereafter, can do little more than expend their genius in rapt effusions on the glory of the light of heaven.

2. There is what we call *intellectual light*.

It is the light of the mind. We see truth that cannot be contradicted. The truths of number are of this kind. We cannot contradict the statement that two and two make four. So there are what are termed necessary truths that must be accepted whenever the words in which they are expressed are understood, as, for example, when we say that every effect must have a cause.

All truth, however, is not of that necessary kind. There is what is called probable truth. It rests on evidence. The light of the mind enables us to perceive the evidence, and to see that in some cases it amounts to certainty. The truths of history, for example, leave no room for doubt. The evidence is so clear that it produces conviction. God has thus implanted in the human mind the light of knowledge. He is the Father, the Parent of this intellectual light without which we should be shut up in mental darkness.

¶ No man who knows himself and who knows God will say that he has been led into all the chambers of God's great palace of truth. This is the sign of progress; this is the charter of the profoundest humility. The more we know the less we know. We see certain points of light here and there, but the great unexplored regions of truth stretch mile on mile beyond all our power to traverse the wondrous plain. How is it with us to-day then? Are we fagged men, exhausted students? Do we sit down under the impression that there is nothing more to be known? If we have that idea let us seek to recover our strength and to recover our inspiration by the word—He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think. There are attainments we have not made, depths we have not sounded, and heights, oh, heights! We can but look up and wonder, expect, adore.[1]

3. There is *moral light*. It is that which enables us to distinguish between right and wrong. We cannot help observing that there is meaning in the word 'ought.' We do not reason about it. We have the inward conviction that there are certain things we ought to do and certain other things we ought to avoid doing. Whence comes this moral light? It comes from God. He is the Father of it. He has made us to be moral creatures. He has placed in our souls the light of law. He has endowed us with the wonderful faculty of conscience. We may have to be educated as to how we are to apply the distinction between right and wrong; but such education would be impossible unless we had within us the capacity to perceive the distinction. It is only moral beings who can be morally educated. Surely we are to recognize this amongst the gifts bestowed upon us by the Father of lights, that we can recognize what we ought to be.

I will place within them as a guide
My umpire Conscience, whom if they will hear,
Light after Light well us'd they shall attain,
And, to the end persisting, safe arrive.[1]

4. Then, highest and best of all, there is *spiritual light*. There is in every man, dim it may be, and often quenched, a certain light that points to God and the unseen. It is the light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world. Where did we get our idea of God and of a region beyond that which meets our eyes? We receive it from God Himself. He is the Father, the Author, of this light that bears testimony to His presence. Without it religion would be reduced to the meaningless performance of certain rites, or rather we should say, there would be no religion at all. The religions of this world, crude and erroneous as in many respects they are, have a true thought to begin with. Individual men may persuade themselves that they can do without God, but certainly the history of the race shows man's need of God. In every nation there are those who seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after Him and find Him though He be not far from every one of us. The light may be obscure, but it is sufficient to show that man was made for God.

[1] J. Parker, *Detached Links*, 328.

[1] Milton.

¶ O Truth, Truth, how did the marrow of my soul pant after Thee! They sounded out Thy name to me, but it was but a voice. As fictitious dishes served up to one in hunger, so instead of Thee they served up to me Thy sun and moon, Thy beauteous works, but not Thyself, and I fed upon them, but was not nourished, but famished. For I hungered and famished, not so much after Thy works, but after Thee Thyself, the Truth, with Whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.[1]

¶ It is with man's Soul as it was with Nature: the beginning of Creation is—Light. Till the eye have vision, the whole members are in bonds. Divine moment, when over the tempest-tost Soul, as once over the wild-weltering Chaos, it is spoken: Let there be Light! Even to the greatest that has felt such moment, is it not miraculous and God-announcing; even as, under simpler figures, to the simplest and least? The mad primeval Discord is hushed; the rudely-jumbled conflicting elements bind themselves into separate Firmaments: deep silent rock-foundations are built beneath; and the skyey vault with its everlasting Luminaries above: instead of a dark wasteful Chaos, we have a blooming, fertile, heaven-encompassed World.[2]

No Variableness.

Ja. i. 17.—'With whom is no variableness.'

THERE is a certain school of thinkers, largely under the influence of that power in present-day philosophy, Professor Bergson, which speaks of God as growing and changing with the growth of Nature and of man. God, they opine, does not know what is going to happen any more than we do. He is not quite certain what the results of His and our moral efforts are going to be. He hopes for the best, He strives for the best, and He bids us strive with Him. But there is no absolute certainty for Him, as for us, that everything will turn out right. All things change and move; there is something new every moment, new to God as well as to ourselves. The course of the world is full of surprises for Him as it is for us. He lives and learns. God to-day is not what He was 2,000 years ago. He is wiser and perhaps sadder. He is not 'the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.' That theory, logically worked out, is the destruction of any perfect trust in Divine wisdom and goodness. In all great religious utterances throughout the ages, the unchangeability of God is the rock of faith. 'Of old hast thou laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of thy hands. They shall perish, but thou shalt endure. Yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed; but thou art the same.'

It is true that there are expressions in the Holy Scriptures in which the language of inspiration condescends to our weakness, and addresses our minds after their own human habits and forms of thought. Thus, in the book of Genesis it is said of God, 'It repented Him that He had made man on the earth. And being touched inwardly with sorrow of heart, He said, I will destroy Man.' Again God says to Moses on the mount, 'Let Me alone that My wrath may be kindled against them, and that I may destroy them.'

It must be borne in mind that there is no change in God literally corresponding to these words. We cannot see Him in His actual perfection, and we are obliged to use words concerning Him that are not strictly applicable to His Divine nature, yet express some aspect of a truth in the way that is most intelligible and striking to us. Human language must needs be imperfect when it attempts to describe what God thinks or what He feels. The law of Divine perfection is that which alone expresses the acts and thoughts of Divine Justice, or Mercy, or Love. God does not, like man, change from the severe mood of justice to the tender mood of compassion and love, swayed at one time and another by different and conflicting emotions. He is not, like man,

[1] Augustine.
[2] *An Outline of the Doctrines of Thomas Carlyle*, 275.

a compound of changing and successive sentiments and phases of thought. 'God is not as man that he should lie, nor as the son of man that he should be changed.' If all that comes under the knowledge of sense, all that is bitter or sweet in our experience of life tells of instability, unrest, and change, yet there is one supreme centre of rest, one supreme Essence, of immutable perfection, over which no shadow of alteration passes.

With God it is ever true, in the Evangelist's words, that 'having loved his own . . . he loved them unto the end.' He suffers no change, His love never grows cold, nor can it ever be appealed to in vain. It is never so weary of our failing as to wholly cease. A father's love to an unworthy son does not wholly die because of the son's ingratitude. In bitter disappointment it awaits better things. It looks patiently for a return to some filial sense of duty and some remembrance of the tender bonds of past affection, some reawakening of nature in the frost-bound heart. But from God all paternity 'in heaven and earth is named.' His fatherly love is eternal —'I have loved thee with an everlasting love.'

The prodigal may wander far indeed, but he can never, for all his sin, get beyond the limits of a love that patiently awaits his return. He can never turn back from his wanderings and his degradation, and knock at the door of his Father's house to find it closed against him. All the beautiful picture of the prodigal's father in the parable is a description of the love of God, ever unchanging, ever ready to bless the least advance made towards it on the part of him who has done all to forfeit it. The patient expectancy of the Father's love, watching its opportunity to assert itself, is represented in the words of the parable—'When he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and was moved with compassion, and running to him fell upon his neck and kissed him.' Thus does the everlasting love of God greet the first effort on the part of man to return to Him; thus does He enfold him in the strong arms of His grace and lead him tenderly homewards.

There is something wonderful in our Lord's acts and words during His public ministry, telling us of the inextinguishable love of God even towards the obdurate and unrepentant. The tears of our Lord, shed over the rebellious obstinacy of Jerusalem, show that though the heart of man may grow hardened against the grace of God, yet the love of God remains the same. A similar lesson is contained in the plaintive words, 'Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent to thee, how often would I have gathered together thy children as a hen doth gather her chickens under her wings, and thou wouldst not.'

Severe as the sentence of eternal Justice may be, yet there is no failure, no cessation in the activity of the love that was from the beginning. Many waters cannot quench it, neither can the floods of human ingratitude drown it. Man's free will may resist and render void every gift of grace and every proof of his Father's love. Yet it can make no change in the nature of that love itself, nor can it make it cease to be. Let but the creature be willing to accept the gift, let the soul but render itself capable of receiving the grace that is offered it, and man may prove by his own experience how infinite is the force, how immutable is the nature, of the love that is Divine.

¶ There is a story of a lad who was devoted to his father, and who stole some money from his employer's till. He was detected in the act, sent to prison, and brought a stain upon the family name. Before serving his sentence, his sister was allowed to visit him in gaol.

'What does mother say?' asked the lad.

'Mother washes her hands of you,' was the reply.

'What do the others say?'

'They never mention your name.'

And then came the question, 'What does father say?'

And the answer was, 'Father sends his love and a kiss.'

This reached home as nothing else did. Is it not a parable of the All-Father's Love? Man fell and went wrong; was—he always is—detected; brought a stain on the family

name; and to man, just as he was ('while we were yet sinners'), came the message, 'Father sends you His Love, and a Kiss.' Jesus was the Love of the Father, and an old and beautiful name for the Holy Ghost was 'the Kiss of God,' the reconciling Power which brings pardon and peace to poor prodigal humanity.[1]

Lo, all things pass away!
Earth's fairest flowers decay;
Soon ends life's summer day.

But Thou, O living One—
O never-clouded Sun—
While untold ages run,

The same shalt ever be!
Behold—we shall not see
Decay or change in Thee!

To-day, as yesterday,
Thou art our Strength—our Stay—
Our Guide along life's way—

A calm—a safe Retreat
When angry tempests beat—
A shadow from the heat—

A Refuge in distress,
A Hope when fears oppress—
A Rest in weariness.[2]

Firstfruits.

Ja. i. 18.—'He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures' (RV).

Firstfruits! The phrase might very well carry us back into the history of ancient peoples and savage religions. But in the New Testament, each time the phrase occurs, the spirit of it is ethical and devotional. Dr. Rendel Harris once described with much vivacity of language a morning in Jerusalem when the firstfruits of the fig harvest were brought into the city. It was as though the whole community held high festival. There was rejoicing, song, and laughter through the streets. Happy crowds greeted each other with phrases about the harvest, like our smiling and conventional greetings at Easter-time or Christmas. The day was bright with thanksgiving, and all because a few figs had been brought into the market—figs which would soon be as common as blackberries. But the point is that they were the pledge of the fuller harvest. They were the promise and prophecy of what was to be.

It is in this sense that the New Testament consistently uses the figure of speech. In this way, John, in the Book of Revelation, speaks of the multitude of the redeemed whose voice he heard as the 'firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb,' the pledge of what humanity shall one day be. In this sense, too, Paul speaks of Christ as the 'firstfruits of them that are asleep,' His resurrection the type and promise of our own. And still more obviously does Paul use the figure in this sense of pledge and prophecy when he declares of the household of Stephanas that it is the 'firstfruits of Achaia,' the ingathering of the first souls from a people who shall one day sit at the feet of Christ. So in this text James declares of himself and of the followers of Christ to whom he was writing, and by implication also of us and of men and women like us, that we should be a kind of 'firstfruits of his creatures,' the type and pledge of a redeemed humanity, a prophecy, a living, breathing, palpitating prophecy, of the whole human race brought home to God, the harvest of the Cross.

1. This is a great and splendid hope. Analyse the elements which have given it form and breath and it will be seen that age by age the blessing which is one day to be universally diffused is first found flourishing in the Christian Church. This is a corrective of the tendency to censoriousness directed against the Church of Christ, even as it is the unfailing antidote to the poison of pessimism. The Church is not perfect and never has been. It is not infallible. Infallibility is unknown amongst mortals. The Church, how-

[1] E. E. Holmes, *The Days of the Week*, 45.
[2] E. H. Divall, *A Believer's Songs*, 76.

ever Divine its origin, is human in its limitations. It is made up of human beings who are by nature children of wrath, not, that is to say, heirs of the anger of God—Paul never meant that—but wrathful children, creatures of impulse and of passion. Such impulses and passions the Christian, just because he is a Christian, seeks to make subject to the higher law, ministrant to the higher life. But being what we are, not marble saints niched in cathedral aisles, but men and women, the Church is human, fallible, imperfect. Yet, all the same, the Church is the best organization upon the face of the earth at the present time. It is, so far as God has yet revealed Himself, His own most efficient instrument for accomplishing His will upon this earth. And while no candid person to-day dreams of denying that the record of the Church is stained and shamed by weaknesses, sins, and crimes, none the less is it true that, age by age, the blessing which is one day to be universally diffused is first found flourishing within the Church.

We may express this in two phrases—both true, each capable of justification in a lifetime of historical research. First, the Church has been on the side of every evil which up to the present hour has been torn out of the life of civilization. Second, no evil has yet been torn out of the life of civilization except by the aid and inspiration of the Church. Those statements are not contradictory each of the other; each one is true in itself. The Church has sinned and has been on the side of colossal sins; but inside the Church, too, have been virtue raised to the highest point known among mortals and grace immortal and divine; and these have waged successful war against many wrongs, are waging war which must be successful against more, and bodying forth the promise of a day when righteousness shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. That is not to say that the whole Church is possessed by these excellences and virtues and graces. It is not to say that the Church holds on to them without any relaxation of grip. There have been sad aberrations. There have been periods of shameful decadence. But the point is that these virtues and excellences and graces are in the Church first, and they are the firstfruits of the after universal harvest.

Let us illustrate this point.

(1) The story of slavery has often been told. It is easy to say that nothing will ever extenuate the guilt of the Church in its defence of human slavery. It is just as easy to say that nothing will ever sufficiently praise the virtue of the Church in its opposition to slavery. And both statements are true. We recall stories of Christian people, slaveholders, slave dealers, and defenders of slavery. We recall just as readily stories of devotion and heroism and living glory incarnate in Christian men and women who had set themselves against it. The first ship that sailed from England on the diabolical errand of buying human beings in Africa and selling them in the West Indies bore—what a travesty!—the sacred name of Jesus. Think of man-stealers on board the 'Jesus'! Hawkins, who was in command of her, was knighted by Queen Elizabeth, and his crest became a manacled negro. Two hundred years later there was in England an organization called 'The Society for Propagating the Gospel in Foreign Lands'. It sent missionaries to the coast of Guinea to convert the negroes, but it owned plantations in the Barbadoes worked by its slaves, and it never made the slightest attempt to give Christian instructions to the victims of its own tyranny. John Newton, author of some of the loveliest lyrics in the whole world of Christian hymnody, author of that glorious hymn, 'How sweet the name of Jesus sounds in a believer's ear,' was a slave dealer.

These stories can be multiplied without end. But they are not any more true to the facts of history than the indubitable record that ancient civilizations, before the coming of Christ, never dreamed that slavery was wrong. The beginnings of emancipation are to be found in the history of the early Church. The appeal, if appeal is necessary, can be made to the non-Christian historians who have shown by chapter and verse, with convincing lucidity and with irrefutable instances, that

the Church of the Living God let loose upon society those burning principles which melted the shackles off the negro's limbs and decreed that the slave should fall and the man arise. The spiritual liberty with which Christ had made His people free was as the firstfruits of a harvest of social and political liberty.

(2) All this can be said, with the necessary change of phrasing, about personal purity and holiness. The two things are not the same. No man would expect to be listened to for five minutes if he claimed that the Church had been free from conspicuous failures in this regard. Licentiousness of the flesh and licentiousness of the spirit have alike marked its course. But neither should any man be regarded as well instructed who did not recognize that everything we know upon the face of the earth to-day of personal purity and of holiness began in the Church of God.

If we open our Plato we see how that supremely lofty spirit broods with a despairing sadness over the sins which were eating out the vigour and character of his nation. Plato could conceive of three principles or forces breaking up these particular evils. First, piety, or love to a divine person; second, desire for honour, or the respect of the good; and third, love of moral beauty; though he was compelled to add 'these be perhaps romantic aspirations.' Yet the merest tyro in historical study knows that the three forces of which he dreamed were in an especial and Divine manner brought into the world by Jesus of Nazareth: 'Love to a Divine person; the respect of the good, that is to say, of His own followers; and the lofty feeling for moral beauty.' Wherever among the nations we find to-day a principle of purity at work we know very well that it has been brought into existence, sustained, and fostered by the Church. And as for holiness—not goodness merely, not love merely, not enthusiasm, but enthusiastic love of goodness, sublimed to ecstasy—it is doubtful whether outside the Church there has ever been a holy man in this world.. Yet most of us treasure the memory of at least one person whom we have at one time known to whom we would not deny the epithet, and these have been brought forth of His will by the word of truth as a kind of firstfruits of His creatures, a promise of what mankind shall be.

(3) This gospel of firstfruits is everywhere justified by the ascertained and treasured results of human struggle. Hopes which were once the secret strength of the aspiring, the consecrated and the great, are now the commonplace possession of us all. It is too late in the day to attempt to glorify in round, set phrases liberty of thought, liberty of conscience, and liberty of speech. But we know where the liberty of the soul was born. We know where its deathless words were first spoken. We know with what pen and with what ink its messages were written. It was born in the Christian Church. Its cradle was a prison cell. It was spoken by lips that torture failed to silence. It was written by fettered hands. It was inscribed in the blood of the martyrs. It grew in conflict with persecuting monarchies and hierarchies and assertive intolerances which would crush free conscience beneath the heel of the priest, and compel the Spirit of God to work through channels which kings approved. These pioneers of liberty were the firstfruits of the harvest we have reaped.

2. Now, what has all this to teach us?—though indeed it is teaching itself all the way. Well, first, let us believe that we are the firstfruits, the pledge of the world's redemption. Why, if we could be persuaded to believe this, to believe it with realizing earnestness; if the ministry of the Spirit, following the ministry of the Word, could burn into our very soul the assurance of it, enthusiasms would be kindled in the heart of every one of us, uncontrollable, contagious, invincible, so that wherever we went it would have to be said of us as of the people who were the firstfruits of apostolic labours, 'the men who have turned the world upside-down have come hither also.'

We need to hold on to this truth of Scripture, to this truth of religion, this truth which is impressed upon the heart of God, that we

who are what we are, with whatsoever virtues and graces we possess, with whatsoever longings for the emancipation of the world's heart from the thraldom of sin, are the firstfruits of His creatures. Are we beating our hearts out against some of the problems of our time? Do we writhe beneath a sense of injustice? Are we longing supremely for the day when man's inhumanity to man shall cease to make countless thousands mourn? And have we allowed our outlook upon the future to be darkened by the sins and sorrows of to-day? Then our only misfortune is that we are a little before our time? We have projected our souls into the infinite and we are not infinitely strong to transform and transfigure the present by the light of our radiant faith; but the world will come round to us yet! Let us be true to the truth we feel to be true, and let us not fear to fling at the feet of any evil the gage of battle, strong in the faith that still overcometh the world:—

> Knowing this, that never yet
> Share of truth was vainly set,
> In the world's wide fallow;
> After hands shall sow the seed,
> After hands from hill and mead
> Reap the harvest yellow.[1]

Swift and Slow

Ja. i. 19.—'Let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath.'

Dr. Dale once spoke thus to his congregation: 'I have sometimes recommended you to underline or copy out every precept in the New Testament which you have never thought of obeying. Perhaps some of you might begin here.' Verily, it would be an excellent place for the majority of us to begin, if we are intent upon enjoying a deeper intimacy with the Father of our spirits.

For this is one of the wisest and most difficult sayings in Holy Scripture. Some Christian precepts can be obeyed deliberately. The propriety of obedience to them is not only felt, beforehand, but can be realized at leisure, as when we resolve to help a friend, or enter some course of procedure the entry into which is made without agitation. But in the command before us the call is likely to arrive when we are least in the mood to listen to it. Thus, however plain the precept is, it is one of the hardest to be kept.

We may be helped in our perception of its importance, and also in our power to observe it, if we bear in mind the words which precede it. James tells us that all good and perfect gifts come down from the Father of lights. But chief among those gifts, he would say, is that 'new life' which he, James, and the Christians, his beloved brethren, had received by means of the Word of Truth. Thus he calls Christians the 'firstfruits' of God's creatures. He impresses upon them the initial fact of their exalted position in the Kingdom of God, and on the strength of this he says, 'Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath.' The hearer is addressed as one not merely invested with great responsibility, but as holding a powerful post. The ground on which the Apostle pleads with him is that he is in union with the Father of Spirits, the Most High God.

1. 'Be swift to hear.' Then we are to cultivate alertness. And if we are to be alert hearers we must assuredly cultivate the habit of not listening to some things. There is a listening that is destructive to the ears. That is so in music. A fine musician determinedly refuses to listen to bad music, lest it should injure his musical discernment. The principle prevails in the realm of spiritual religion; it is absolutely essential that we should learn the art of not listening. Our Master repeatedly confirmed this counsel. 'Take heed *what* ye hear.' We are to sift the subjects, and many of them must be refused a hearing. We are to give our attention to the higher voices lest, by heeding the clamour, we destroy the exquisitness of our senses. And our Master also added the counsel: 'Take heed

[1] C. F. Aked.

how ye hear.' We are not only to be scrupulous as to the matters which we allow to pass through the gateway of the ear; we are to be equally scrupulous as to the kind of attention we pay to them when they have crossed the threshold. We may listen in a spirit that is possessed by mere flippancy, and we thereby do our visitor a great wrong. Or we may listen with a sort of rude curiosity, in which there is no deep and sacred quest. Or we may listen with eager reverence, if perchance the message bring us news of unknown worlds. By this discipline, daily and hourly practised, we should most inevitably become expert hearers.

We should be able to discern the wind of the Spirit blowing through many a poor sermon! When there is no literary grace in a man's speech, when the fashioning of his message is loose and crude, when his pronunciation is faulty, we should not be prevented from hearing the delicate breathings of the Spirit which created Pentecost. At a somewhat unattractive place the other day, a native, mindful of his little town, said: 'Not much to see, sir, but there is a fine air!' A keen spiritual alertness would discover the fine air blowing in many an unattractive presentation of the evangel of God.

And we should also be keen to hear the call of need. The 'Voice from Macedonia' would not be lost in the besieging and welcome clamour of the immediate crowd. We should hear the call as a mother hears the faint cry of her child in the chamber above even though the room is filled with conversation and laughter. 'I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?' That, too, is a voice which would speak into the secret places of the soul if only we had become masters of the fine art of listening to the highest.

¶ I have heard a great deal about the 'call to the ministry' since those days, but my call to follow my Saviour and save as many sinners from the pains of Hell as I possibly could came to me at the beginning of my career. It came as loud and as distinct as it has ever done since. While it might seem possible to be a servant without being a son, it appeared to me utterly impossible to be a son without being a servant. I never needed either my Bible or my minister, or any special movement of the Holy Spirit on my heart to press this truth home upon me. It appeared to me then, and has ever since, and will I think for evermore, self-evident that the religion of Jesus Christ could not be possessed without the Christ-like hunger for the Salvation of men.[1]

2. 'Slow to speak.' Then we are to cultivate a sacred self-restraint. Here is an admirable slowness to be studied and practised. We are never to speak until we have listened, and especially until we have listened to the voice of God. 'I will hear what God the Lord will speak.' But what a word is this for a minister! We are always talking, and we must talk whether we have anything to say or not! But the peril not only besets the minister; the danger is in every life, no matter what class or calling. We are too ready with our tongues; we are too glib in judgment, pronouncing upon men and affairs with a cheap and flippant dogmatism. We do not pause to sift and weigh the evidence, still less do we wait to pray about it. We pronounce sentence almost as soon as the court is constituted, and we have little or no 'waiting patiently for Him.' We should do an untold service in many a company if, in answer to their challenge for our judgment, we would clearly reply that the matter is still fluid, and our judgment is not formed. And sometimes we are too glib in religious speech. This is not the peril of many, but it is certainly the danger of some. They use the name of God much too readily, and they thoughtlessly fling it into their common conversation. They seem to think that this is the way to sanctify speech, just as they might imagine it would sanctify their festivity if they placed a sacramental cup upon the table. The prodigal use of pious phrases does not make for pious character.

¶ Charles Kingsley so dreaded the irreligious use of religious speech that whenever he felt

[1] H. Begbie, *William Booth*, ii. 196.

obliged to use the name of God he would make a short pause before it was pronounced, in order that in the very slowness of his approach the name might be hallowed. 'By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.' Let us cultivate this holy slowness, and when our words emerge at last they will be weighted with the very mind of God.[1]

3. 'Slow to wrath.' People who talk a great deal are very apt to heat themselves by talking: they get excited, they provoke contradiction and discussion, and then their temper rises; that is true, whatever the talk is about. And it is often true, unhappily, when the talk is about religion. Indeed there are men who mistake heat and passion in the maintenance of their own religious opinions for fidelity to God and earnestness in God's service. They are intolerant. People who maintain traditional beliefs are intolerant in defending them; people who reject traditional beliefs are intolerant in assailing them; the intolerance is as great on the one side as on the other. But 'the wrath of man,' James says, 'worketh not the righteousness of God.' Our heated feeling, though it may be created by what we think is a good cause, does not make us better servants of God or of man; it contributes nothing to our own righteousness, it provokes other people to sin.

Be calm in arguing: for fierceness makes
Errour a fault, and truth discourtesie.
Why should I feel another man's mistakes
More, then his sicknesses or povertie?
In love I should: but anger is not love,
Nor wisdome neither: therefore gently move.[2]

[1] J. H. Jowett, in *The British Congregationalist*, March 28, 1907.
[2] George Herbert, *The Temple*.

The Reception of the Word.

Ja. i. 21.—'Receive with meekness the engrafted word.'

'PREACHING recently at York, Dean Inge said that any preacher worth his salt would infinitely prefer to preach to men rather than to a mixed congregation. It was true that women for the most part were more susceptible to religious appeals than men, and that made it easier for clergymen to talk to them, but he confessed that when he saw before him an average congregation, containing 75 per cent. of women, he felt something was wrong in the state of things producing that result.

"I have even," added Dr. Inge, "a sense of shame that ministers of the Church, who are commissioned to preach so essentially manly a message as the Gospel of Christ, should have presented it in such a way as to repel the majority of men." '

Why do people, men especially, stay away from sermons? For a very simple reason: because they don't like them.

But why is it that people do not like sermons? To state the matter rather crudely, it is partly because, human nature being what it is, even the most eloquent preacher, provided he is faithful to his charge, can only partially succeed in rendering palatable truths which of their very essence are unpalatable to this same nature. While, as for the ordinary preacher, it is simply impossible that he should please everyone. If he talks quietly, then the people whom it takes an earthquake to stir, conclude that he cannot be in earnest. If, on the other hand, he 'lets himself go,' and essays to be impressive or vehement, the more fastidious among his audience declare that he ought to leave that kind of thing to accomplished orators, and to content himself with the plainest of discourses. If he deals in generalities, one half of his hearers will say: 'How deadly dull!' If, on the contrary, he comes down to particulars and drives home the truth by means of pointed illustrations, the other half will complain that he makes the cap fit too tightly.

Then, again, there are always a certain number of persons whom nothing will satisfy. They do not know what they want, except that they always want something different from what they get.

¶ Two laymen (both of them being retired military men) met one day, and joined in conversation. 'I am very glad,' said one, 'to see you coming to our church sometimes.' 'Yes,' said the other, 'I like the church, and I like the service; but I cannot stand the man you have as Vicar.'

'Oh, indeed; what's wrong with him?'

'He gets up into the pulpit; and he talks to us as though he believes he has come straight from the Almighty with a message for us: and I can't stand that sort of thing.'

'Indeed, my friend,' was the reply, 'you could not pay him a higher compliment. What else do you suppose he is there for, except to give us a message from God?'[1]

1. What, then, is the solution of the difficulty? It lies, like the solution of many other difficulties, in looking at the matter in relation to God's will. To do God's will as perfectly as we can is, or ought to be, the one thing that we seriously care about. Now what is God's will in the matter? It is that the preacher or instructor should spare no pains to give us of his best, and that we on our side should make the best of what he gives us. Whether it pleases God to bless his endeavours with visible results, or whether, after beginning perhaps with high hopes and aspirations, he finds himself checked by many disappointments, it is his business to keep plodding along. And it is our business to make allowances for the limitations and shortcomings that are inseparable from human nature in a preacher as in other men.

The practical conclusion is, then, that we should receive 'with meekness,' that is to say, with a certain willing and cheerful patience, the word of God as it comes to us through very imperfect human channels.

¶ Preaching resembles music in this respect that for a real success three things are required—a theme worth hearing, a sufficient instrument, and a master whose deft touch can draw from both what his soul finds in them. As preachers we possess the needed theme, far and away the most heart-gripping and inspiring in the world. What a reflection on us bunglers it is that we have so mishandled the chivalry and glory of that exciting, valorous, thrilling tale of Jesus Christ, that we are told these days that people are so thoroughly bored by such a very dull and stale affair as we have made of it that twenty minutes' talk about it is fully as much as they can stand, and anything more really an infliction through which they can only yawn and fidget miserably—the very people who will spend hours upon hours at a more or less silly opera, or over some transient tale! With such a subject we ought to have swept the world.

And we have a marvellous instrument, out of tune a bit, so all the experts are agreed, and not entirely dependable; yet even as it is the greatest of all God's creations, so far as we know. For we play on the living, throbbing hearts and minds and wills of men and women; can draw out such marvellous stops! Watch a master, how inevitably he secures response from it to his own every mood. A touch on this, and all the sobbing sorrow of many experiences answers you; or a quick finger upon that, and the brave hearts are ringing out their exultation, or their valiant daring of defiance—a glorious instrument which, even for fumbling hands it is a sheer delight to play, and feel it giving answering expression to our inmost thoughts. But if we had sufficient art and skill and knowledge, what could we not do with it?

I once had an impressive experience sitting on the seat behind the pulpit in St. George's, Edinburgh, when Whyte was preaching to the great packed church. I could not see his face, yet I could follow with exactness all the ever-shifting play of sunshine and shadow that kept passing over it. Apparently he frowned, for all these listening faces darkened. And then his must have cleared, for all these others

[1] J. W. W. Moeran.

suddenly lit up. There they were, so mastered, so absorbed, so lost in the sermon, so one with him, that, all unconsciously, they acted as a perfect mirror of his every mood.[1]

2. But, besides 'meekness,' there is in the text another word that deserves attention. James speaks of the 'engrafted' word. We all understand something, at least, of the process of grafting. The gardener makes an incision, say, in the trunk of a crab-apple tree, and inserts a slip cut from a Ribstone pippin; and the fruit produced by the branch that grows from the graft is not that of the trunk but of the slip. But in order that the operation may be successful, the operation must be performed, the incision must be made, and the trunk and the slip must enter into vital union. If we could imagine the trunk to have a will of its own, and to say: 'No: I don't want any operation at all, I am quite content as I am,' the answer of course would be: 'Then you will just go on bearing crab-apples, and no one will ever gather any Ribstone pippins from you.' So it is with us. If the word of God is to bear any fruit in and through us, we must receive it as the trunk receives the graft, and we must contribute something of our own, namely, the cooperation of our own understanding and will, whereby we reflect on what we hear, and determine to act in accordance with it.

Moreover, there is just this other point of comparison between the grafting of a tree and the hearing of the word of God which it may be worth while to notice. If you have ever seen trees that have been grafted, you will have noticed that the gardener has covered up every place where a graft has been made with a great lump of clay. And herein is a parable of the way in which, the world being such as it is, and human nature being what God has made it, we receive the word of God. We have, so to say, to take it in clay. No human instructor can convey to our minds the truth on matters of religion, without wrapping it up in a great lump of his own thoughts and words. These are the clay, and it is the truth that does the work. The clay, that is to say, the thoughts and words, the comparisons, illustrations, examples, and so forth, in which it is wrapped up, serve only as a sort of protection or sheath. And so, when we are inclined to think that some preacher whom we have heard has been prosy or dull, we do well to remember that even though he may have used rather a liberal allowance of clay, or clay of a rather poor quality, nevertheless at the centre of all there is the tiny slip of truth, which will bear fruit if we receive it 'with meekness,' allowing it to be engrafted and to strike root in our hearts and minds.[1]

[1] A. J. Gossip, *In Christ's Stead*, 64.

The Engrafted Word.

Ja. i. 21.—'Receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls.'

1. It has been thought by some that the 'word' which the readers of this Epistle are here directed to receive is the personal word—that is, Christ; and in the Prayer Book 'word' is printed with a capital W, as if to authorize this interpretation. In the writings of the Apostle John the 'Word of God' is one of the titles of Christ. The first verse of his Gospel is 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.' The circumstances of his time, the disputes about the person of Christ which prevailed within the Church, the errors of belief into which some Christians fell, induced the Apostle to present the truth to his readers in that form. Christ is the personal Word, the personal expression to mankind of what God is. And it is quite true that Christ Himself as well as His teaching must be received by those who would be saved. The Apostle Paul wrote to the Galatians about Christ being formed in them—that is, the mind and character of Christ. To the Colossians he wrote, 'As therefore ye received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him.' To those who, having

[1] H. Lucas, *At the Parting of the Ways*, 214ff.

surrendered themselves to Christian teaching, sought for mercy in dependence upon the merits of Christ, and received for His sake the forgiveness of sin, the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ was given. And the work of the Spirit was to form Christ in those who then were called by His name, to produce in them and to develop more and more the features of the Christian character, so that they should become likenesses of Christ without any interference with that individuality of character which distinguished them from one another. We read the words which Paul wrote to the Galatians, 'I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me'; and we feel that Peter might have written those words, or John. Nevertheless Paul was a very different sort of person from Peter; and both of them were different from John.

It is quite true, then, that they who would be saved through Christ must receive not only His teaching, His word or message of salvation, but also Himself, the personal Word, that He by His Spirit may begin and carry to completion the work of transformation within them.

Yet the Apostle James was not referring to the personal Word when he wrote 'Receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls.' For in the very next verse he has written 'Be ye doers of the word and not hearers only.' The readers of this Epistle could not be doers of the personal Word, though they might be hearers of Him whenever they paid attention to His teaching. That word, therefore, which the readers of the Epistle are directed to receive is not the personal Word, but the word or message of the gospel. We read in the Acts of the Apostles that Peter said to Cornelius and his friends, 'The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ . . . that word, I say, ye know.' And that word or message was that Jesus Christ, filled with the Holy Ghost and possessing Divine power, went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed by the devil; that, having been put to death by Pilate at the demand of the Jews, He was raised up from death by God, and publicly shown, not to all the people but to chosen witnesses, Apostles and others; that this Jesus had commanded them to preach to the people, and to testify that he was appointed to be Judge of all men hereafter, but a Saviour now, for through His name whosoever believed on Him should receive remission of sins.

This word or message of salvation is called by the Apostle James the 'engrafted' or 'implanted' word. To believe the word of salvation, to receive it into the heart and act upon it, to have experience of the blessings which it brings, and to yield absolutely and entirely to the obligations which it imposes, is to have a precious shoot planted with success in the wild stock of our human nature. The graft communicates its own excellence to the stock upon which it is grafted. It transforms it, making it to become something wholly different from what it would otherwise have been. Yet the natural qualities of the stock are not destroyed. The graft, taking possession of the stock, uses that which it finds, elevating and ennobling that which it uses. So the grace of the gospel—that is, the influence of the Spirit of Christ—communicates the excellence of the character of Christ to every child of Adam who receives it. It transforms the inheritors of a fallen nature, making them to become something wholly different from what they would otherwise have been. They may each one say with the Apostle Paul 'I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.' Yet their natural qualities are not destroyed. The grace of the gospel, taking possession of them, uses the endowment of natural qualities and capacities which it finds, elevating and consecrating that which it uses.

2. If the gospel with its accompanying grace thus communicates the spiritual excellence of the heavenly to that which is earthly, transforming and ennobling that which receives it, if it is like an excellent graft, successfully planted in that which is of baser quality, it is evident that Christianity is not anything that we can develop out of our own resources, but something that must come to us from

without. They who ignore this truth are substituting for Christianity a morality or goodness of which unassisted human nature is incapable.

¶ Fortunately we live in days when this truth receives almost everywhere the acknowledgment which it deserves. A century ago it was otherwise. One of the old generation of Evangelical men who lived in the early part of the nineteenth century describes a visit which he paid perhaps a hundred years ago to a country rector, who after many years' residence at the University had accepted a country living. This man was a man of an active spirit, full of commendable zeal for the reformation of the parish to which he had come. He wanted to make the men sober and honest and the women industrious. But he had no idea of leading them to think of what they owed as professing Christians to Christ, of the overwhelming obligation under which He had placed them by dying for them, which thought would make sobriety and honesty and industry to be portions of their Christian duty.

And when his visitor ventured to ask him whether a true reformation of those who needed it must not be brought about by the communicated influence of the divine Spirit, the result of the soul's union with Christ, he hastily exclaimed, 'No more of that, I pray.' Now he was probably a learned man, but he had not yet learned that which is best worth learning. People may be made to become sober, honest, and industrious on the ground of prudence. Our fallen nature in its own wild growth is capable of that sort of reformation. It is a superficial alteration; it does not touch the root of the matter. But a true reformation of character can never be developed out of the resources of our fallen nature. It is the produce of the engrafted word, and can never be produced otherwise.[1]

3. 'The engrafted word, which is able to save your souls'—not which *must* or *will* save, but which *is able* to save. The Apostle Paul in like manner reminded Timothy that the Holy Scriptures, which he had known from childhood, were able to make him wise unto salvation. But the Scriptures themselves would never have made Timothy wise unto salvation, however accurately he might have remembered and however clearly he might have understood all that he read. It was an unworthy idea in the minds of our Lord's adversaries amongst the Jews that in the Scriptures themselves, explained to them and carried in the memory, they had eternal life, as if the mere knowledge of what God has said and the retention of it in the memory could save the soul. 'Ye search the Scriptures,' said Jesus Christ to them, 'because ye think that in them ye have eternal life; and these are they which bear witness of me; and ye will not come to me, that ye may have life.' What Paul wrote to Timothy was that the Scriptures were able to make him wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. Timothy has something more to do than to acquaint himself with the Scriptures, however well acquainted with them he may become. He must believe in Him who is revealed in the Scriptures; his dependence must be on Him. He must come to Him for what He has to give. And then the Scriptures, which he has known from childhood, will have made him wise unto salvation. And it is still true that the word of salvation, heard or read, is not profitable for salvation unless it is mixed with faith in those who hear or read it. The word of God is a wonder-working power, mighty in operation; but it does not produce its effects in any magical way. It is able to save the soul, but it does not save necessarily. It requires the submission of the will. The stock of our nature must receive the word which God designs to engraft; and if we do but receive it, He will make it effectual.

¶ We are no longer saved by attention to carnal ordinances, as the ancient Jews were. Those ordinances were instituted as a test of obedience, but that time of arbitrary training is past. We are not saved by ecclesiastical observances, good as they may be in their place. We are not even saved primarily by moral conduct, essential as such conduct may ultimately be.

[1] W. H. Ranken, *Faith and Duty*, 249.

The confidence of the heart in God is the one condition of salvation in this evangelical age. Confidence in God is the living principle of obedience. Confidence in His love, in His redeeming love; confidence in the faithfulness of His word and in His dealings with us; confidence in His declared promise of life and immortality. Out of this trust of the heart grows everything that is dutiful and beautiful.[1]

4. 'Receive with meekness the engrafted word.' In order that the word of salvation may have the effect which God designed it to have, communicating the excellence of the heavenly to that which is earthly, there must be a meek reception of it. How many there are who receive the word of salvation, yet do not receive it with meekness! The ruined condition in which love found mankind, the necessity of an Atonement, the justification of the believing, the sanctification of the pardoned—these particulars of the word of salvation are received by many only as so much theological knowledge to store the mind with, or as a body of truth about which they are prepared to argue. To such persons it is a source of great satisfaction to reflect that they, at any rate, are in possession of truth of doctrine, and are able to detect and expose the least deviation of others from that truth. Now we need not undervalue theological knowledge or the controversial use which can be and ought to be made of that knowledge when the occasion calls for it. But we have to remember that, when the word of salvation is received and valued chiefly as theological knowledge or as controversially useful, it is not received with meekness, it is not productive of faith, and it will not save the soul. There is generally much self-assertion in those whose interest in the word of salvation is theological and controversial rather than personal. Self-assertion, an attitude of the spirit to which so much of sin is due, must be exchanged for an attitude of submission by those who would be saved.

[1] W. L. Watkinson, *The Gates of Dawn*, 173.

¶ Bishop Boyd Carpenter's youth was spent in Liverpool. 'Liverpool at this time, with its mixed English and Irish population, was a centre of religious conflicts. "Controversy! you cannot live without controversy," cried Hugh MacNeile, the orator *par excellence* of Liverpool in those days—and the most exciting subject of controversy was found to be religion. Christian *versus* Atheist: Protestant *versus* Romanist: Churchman *versus* Dissenter: Tractarian *versus* Evangelical. Young Boyd Carpenter was an eager attendant at these debates: they taught him the points of difference in the religious world; they presented him with admirable examples of dialectical skill; but they gave him something of even greater value, a lifelong distaste for religious controversy. He wrote some years later: "Is it greater wisdom or lessened zeal which makes me weary of it all as akin to vanity?" '[1]

Hearing and Doing.

Ja. i. 22.—'Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only.'

THE extraordinarily practical character of the teaching of our Lord and the Apostles is a point which we often fail to realize. So long as we are content to regard the Bible as a hunting-ground for arguments upon abstruse doctrines, or the passing controversies of the day, we have good reason to be disappointed. The gospel of Jesus Christ is a practical, living message for ordinary men and women. It is intended for those who are occupied in the daily duties of home and business. The people who formed the great majority of the early Christians were simple folk. The writings of the New Testament correspond to their needs. And of the many quite practical portions of the New Testament few are so practical as this short Epistle of James.

The keynote of the Epistle is very well struck in the text 'But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.'

[1] H. D. A. Major, *The Life and Letters of W. Boyd Carpenter*, 7.

The 'word' is the same spoken of in the preceding 21st verse, and also in the 18th; in the former place as 'the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls'; in the 18th as 'the word of truth.' The meaning would seem to be equivalent to the 'gospel,' the whole message of Divine truth communicated by the Apostles to the Churches. Another statement implies that there were those in the early Jewish Church, as there are in all Churches, who heard the message, but neither laid it up in their hearts nor practised it in their lives. Now there can be no doubt in any healthy mind as to the necessity of really living out what truth we profess to receive, of reducing it to practice, and making it the principle and guide of our lives. Truth which is not so applied is not truth for us. Let the word of truth, therefore, be a word implanted in our hearts, and not merely in our heads. Let us be doers of it, and not hearers only, growing in grace and in the knowledge of our God and Saviour.

Let us look at two classes of hearers who are not doers.

1. First, there is the listener who is caught and convinced. He is glad of the direct truth, which he apprehends with clear decision. He is not asleep, or recalcitrant, or foggy. He has no desire to shirk. He likes what he hears. It tallies with his conscience, with his imagination, with his will. It reads him to himself. He sees himself in it. The words that he hears are the old words that have always delighted him as long as he can remember anything. It is his own true self that he recognizes with joy in the mirror of God's word. Only, outside the Church door it is so different. Another man takes his place as it were, with other motives, other appetites, other engagements. It is as if the first man, the natural self, had never been, so entirely has it vanished from the scene. We should not know him again. He does not know himself. He himself does not attempt to preserve any consistency. He drops what he had been while he listened. He never refers to it. It has altogether slipped out of his memory. He forgets what manner of man he was, and this suddenly. There is no gradual transition—no process of adaptation. The affairs of the world, the passions, the interests, the anxieties of the day are taken up without an apology, without a momentary gap. He is immersed in them at their first touch. And he never appears to trouble himself for an instant how they tally with the words that he had so enjoyed while they were being spoken, or with the revelation of his true self which he had gladly accepted under the immediate illumination of the Lord. He has taken up another part; and into this he flings himself without an afterthought, without a qualifying reserve. 'Straightway,' says James, 'Straightway.' There and then, he altogether forgets what manner of man he was.

2. Then there is the hearer who keeps up a constantly fluctuating state of religious emotion without any corresponding life of religious duty. There is no want of sincerity, no lack of real religious feeling, or at least of feeling which is deeply stirred about religious subjects; but there is a considerable lack of any moral performance. While running after religious excitement, sometimes of the vagrant and casual kind, he seems none the better for all his running. His life is not more beautiful, his work is not more self-denying. He does not bear cheerfully harder burdens than his neighbours. He is not found doing harder duties. Is there not such a thing as preaching to others and being ourselves none the better for the sermon, of laying burdens upon others which we ourselves refuse to touch? It is a good thing to have solemn religious feelings—all casual religious feeling which is humble while it is earnest, tolerant while it is zealous, deserves the highest respect—but the highest use of religious feeling is always to produce religious action. If all were to find relief in mere excitement, it would become not only valueless, but hurtful. The susceptibility which lays some open to religious impression exposes them to every new excitement, and they pass from phase to phase of

excited feeling while their hearts remain undisciplined and their lives remain unimproved.

¶ When emotional response to religious appeal is divorced from obedience to the duties it imposes, the result is always disastrous. Unexpressed in conduct, feeling quickly passes from the extremes of exultation to the depths of despondency, till the moral nature is weakened. Character loses its strength and stability. Admiration for virtue is mistaken for its practice. The applause of courage, justice, charity is substituted for resolute effort to attain that which is so warmly approved. Moral power is exhausted by enthusiastic commendation of virtues, which leaves us too feeble to practise them.

A modern scholar has pointed out that the New Testament, like Greek literature at its best, avoids anything like sentimentalism. There is no encouragement of vague fancies in Christianity. The reality of life's duties is insisted on with impressive clarity of vision and firmness of aim. While emotion is evoked, it never ends in itself, but is intended to be preparatory to and the accompaniment of action. Feeling which evaporates without bearing fruit leads to the sure failure of moral vigour.

He who lets his feelings run
  In soft luxurious flow,
Shrinks when hard service must be done,
  And faints at every woe.

Men unlike each other in character and capacities manifest their divergences in nothing more obviously than in their power of emotional response to the claims of religion. But it is impossible to judge their true condition by the ardour or apathy of their feelings alone. A man may be quick to give enthusiastic applause to self-sacrifice and nobility of life, and yet live in a satisfied self-indulgence. He may be impressed by the beauty and worth of virtue, but only to become eager to commend to others what he will never do himself.

Emotion is a good servant, but a bad master. It must be put to the service of right thinking and true action. In this transference of feeling to conduct it may seem to lose its freedom, but it acquires new powers and finds new ways for its expression. The worth of religious sensibility is to be tested in the adventures for truth and goodness to which it calls men, and in the eagerness of self-sacrifice to which it inspires them.[1]

The Mirror.

Ja. i. 23.—'If any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass.'

Without attempting to make this fine simile run (as the expression is) on all fours, the general intention we can hardly mistake. 'The hearing of the word' is unquestionably likened to a man seeing the true reflection of his countenance in a glass. A true reflection, in this instance, because the mirror is in all respects true and perfect: not as with that mirror used by Paul in a famous passage to indicate only a partial, and partly misleading reflection—'Here we see in a mirror darkly.'

The image of the mirror as used by James would seem more simple and natural to an Englishman of three centuries ago than it does to some of us. There was no simile more common to the writers and readers of the Renaissance than this. It was one of the most hackneyed titles for a book, in which the Mirror claimed to be held up to some phase of human nature, that it might see itself reflected. The metaphor became a fashion, and in its turn passed out of fashion. But it does not demand much of us to revive it again, and recognize the real use and value of it. The word of God, says James, is the mirror wherein God shows us our true selves—the real man within us. And by the word of God he means every truth as it is in Jesus, wherever we are brought face to face with it, not always or necessarily in the pages of an inspired volume. It may be from the lips of a preacher, or a

[1] *Life's True Values: Selected Essays from* 'The Times,' 191.

friend; from a picture, a poem, an essay, a casual hint, a chance remark; or it may be the lesson and moral of some personal experience, some event in one's own life or that of others—wherever a revelation or suggestion of something higher, better than ourselves is shed upon our life and consciousness.

¶ The newspapers have just recorded the story of a woman who resolved that her husband should know his appearance when he was drunk. She knew well enough, and needed not that any should tell her; her children also knew by sad experience: but the man himself had a very imperfect idea of the state of the case. So once, when he came home inebriated and fell into a maudlin slumber, she sent for the photographer and had her husband photographed as he sat in his chair. When the photograph was laid beside the husband's plate at breakfast next morning, it was a revelation; the sobered man experienced a decidedly new sensation. There was no need of explanation; explanation was unnecessary. There was no possibility of contradiction, and no room for argument.[1]

1. The word of God is such a photograph. St. James calls it a mirror. The word of God reveals a man to himself, suddenly presents him with his own likeness. Let us take the experience which has happened to any one of us. A man is a guest at a public reception, moving about amid crowds in large chambers. He is keenly interested in those about him; he listens to the buzz of talk; he catches sight of this great personage or that, and notes him with pleasure; he nods to friends; he pushes his way about; he engages in eager conversation; he is excited by the noise and the lights and the movement; he is carried out of himself by the thronging splendours. Suddenly he stops; his eye falls on a familiar figure. It is perhaps seen mingled with the general crowd, or it faces him in some corridor; his attention is arrested, and he looks. Why, it is himself! He is in front of a mirror, and he can see his own presence as it appears to others, as it takes its place and bears its part amid the crowd. He can look on at himself as if from outside, as if he were another person altogether; and a curious sensation comes over him. So, that is what I look like, is it? That is what people see when they greet me? That is what they mean when they name me? That is the physical impression I produce? So a man pauses for a moment, and wonders, and takes his own measure. He gains an estimate of his own relative importance, the proportion in which he stands to other men when mingling in a crowd, the points of significance or insignificance that belong to his personal appearance. He learns what sort of judgment he might be inclined to pass upon himself if he met himself in the street, or if he saw himself in a stranger.

The word of God ought to act in some such way upon us. In the thick throng of the busy earth, as we listen to the word and pass under its sway we should stop arrested by the sight of one who, for a moment, may puzzle. Who is it? I am sure I know him. I cannot quite remember his name. So we begin saying, and before the words have fallen from our lips we have given the answer, 'Why, it is myself! I have not been thinking of myself, exactly. I have been enjoying the service, and been interested in the music, and been excited by the crowd, and been glad to hear read or preached the dear old Bible words which have always been familiar as friends. Somehow a change has passed over me. I am caught; the old words have got a new power; they direct upon me their attention; they single me out. I behold myself, and I do this not so much by introspection, by subjective preoccupation with my inward self; rather I look on at myself as if at one of the multitude of men; I note my behaviour, my conduct as others see it, as it impresses them, and as it impresses me. I understand now what they say about it, the estimate they form of it, the direction it takes, the influence it exercises, the impetus it gives. I seem to watch myself sorted, and measured, and weighed as a factor in the world's story, as an agent in the general sum of things. I understand a little better what

[1] W. L. Watkinson, *Studies in Christian Character, Work and Experience*, i. 55.

it is that I count for; what I contribute to the body of good and evil in the world, to the happiness and unhappiness of my fellows. I count a stricter measure of my own importance, or unimportance, and of my use of the opportunities given me; I hear my own sentence delivered, my worth or worthlessness pronounced: all my own personal explanations and apologies and self-interpretations have vanished.'

2. But in other ways we are furnished with our moral photograph. Public men occasionally find their true self depicted in the journals with startling frankness, and accuracy. A wife will sometimes give her husband a verbal photograph of his spirit and disposition, every bit as true and striking as the objectionable portrait laid on the breakfast table by the faithful spouse who revealed the husband drunk to the husband sober. And there are occasions when the kodak is used by the husband and the unflattering image is presented at the other end of the table. Children are apt to strike off extraordinarily sharp and afflictive pictures of their seniors. Our neighbours present us with portraits of ourselves that we should not care to see hung in the National Portrait Gallery. And not rarely does the faithful preacher surprise his hearers by revealing themselves to themselves as Nathan convicted David.

But, after all, it is in the action of the Spirit of God upon the individual conscience that self-revelation is known in its most perfect and vivid fashion. The Searcher of the thoughts of the heart, on occasion, forces the hidden man of the heart to declare himself, and we are convicted and confounded.

¶ Very wonderful are some of the feats of photography. The delicate film on the plate being more sensitive than the retina of the eye, stars so distant and faint as to be invisible to the observer through the most powerful telescope are made known by the camera. It gives a perfect picture of the falling snowflake. It registers changes which our senses are not fine enough to perceive. It analyses the movements of a swallow's wing. By the spark of a Leyden jar, which is brighter than the light of the sun, a bullet discharged from a gun has been photographed, and the bullet travelling faster than sound appears in the negative as if at rest. But all this is only a dim and distant suggestion of the swift and delicate action of the Spirit of God on the human soul, recording and revealing the thought afar off, the fugitive fancy, the obscurely working feeling, the unconfessed intent, and all the subtle secrets which belong to our deepest life. The Spirit of God knows us, and as we can bear such knowledge He acquaints us with the facts of our own heart. In memorable moments we see ourselves as God sees us.'[1]

¶ In Coulson Kernahan's *Face beyond the Door* we read of a man in despair being shown an image and asked whose image it was. He recognized it as the face of the man God meant him to be, the ideal of his youth. Charles Dickens depicts a similar scene in *A Tale of Two Cities*, where, as Sidney Carton gazes into a mirror, he beholds a face emerge. It is not his own but that of Charles Darney. As he peers into that mirror he sees the face of the man 'you have fallen away from, and what you might have been.' He that looketh into a perfect law, the law of liberty, and so continueth, being not a hearer that forgetteth, but a doer that worketh, this man shall be blessed in his doing.[2]

The Image of the Ideal.

Ja. i. 23-25.—'For if any one is a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a mirror: for he beholdeth himself, and goeth away, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But he that looketh into the perfect law, the law of liberty and so continueth, being not a hearer that forgetteth, but a doer that worketh, this man shall be blessed in his doing' (RV).

It is clear that this image of James may give us two very different suggestions. It may mean that, if a man looks into the Word of

[1] W. L. Watkinson, *Studies in Christian Character, Work and Experience*, i. 57.
[2] J. MacDougall, *The Modern Conflict*, 39.

God, he will see himself as he now is, in his present very unideal state; or it may mean that he will see himself as he might be, if he were only fairly in the grip of Jesus Christ.

1. On the one hand, the suggestion given is that of a man who looks in a mirror and sees his face white and strained, with signs of illness upon it; and then, desiring not to stand up to the alarming, turns away and endeavours to forget.

Such a picture the Word of God, in Scripture and in conscience and in experience, does undoubtedly give us. In the light of His countenance and His law, a man comes to himself, and the signs of sickness are upon him. Nor is it only the sacred page that does us this service of showing us own own faces. What we call the secular page acts in the same way sometimes. What man is there who has read *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde,* who has not, with an eerie sense of fear, seen a suggestion of what might be his own face threatening him from those inspired pages? The whole of that book, it is true, is contained in a verse in Hosea, 'and they became like the thing that they loved.' But the working of the law is shown so near us by Stevenson, in a way that we recognize as so uncannily true, that many a man has put that book high amongst the moral deterrents which have come to him.

To come back to James, we learn from him that the grey face that has displayed us our own, is meant to be a spur to immediate action; that without action, indeed, it were better for us if the vision had not come.

2. But the image in our text has another interpretation, which was, perhaps, the one in the writer's mind. 'Natural face' should be translated 'the face of his birth.' He is a man beholding the face of his birth in a mirror. Now, what is the face of our birth translated into moral language? Well, if physical analogies go for anything, it is not an evil face. Whatever else a child may be—and any child early gives indications of a quarrel with its own world—it does not *look* evil. So little does it look evil that its mere presence, with eyes of wonder and lips that know no guile, is a deterrent to all but the worst of men. The base retires into its den before the straight gaze of a child.

If analogies such as these go for anything, the face of our birth suggests a thought not of what we are, but of what we might have been, and, by God's grace, may be yet. It is a dream-face—dreamed not by us, but by God Himself, who formed us first—that haunts us at moments when the truth is upon us. A face, strong and clear-eyed, speaking of a zest in life and a peace, a face that reveals a mind delighting in the lovely and true and the things of good report. Such are the lineaments that a man may see mirrored sometimes in the Word of God. But we tend most easily, as a man passes from a glance at his reflection in a glass, to forget the dream-face of our own ideal. Naturally enough; for the achievement of it, the translation of it from the ideal to the real, calls for effort and discipline. It is an interferer, that thought of what we might be. Its winning lies upstream, dead against the strong current of our devices and desires. It is convenient to forget it, until a more convenient season. If a man remember it, and act towards its winning, then, even though it is himself, he must deny himself to reach it. To him is given no easy restfulness. 'Never for the chosen peace,' is the word that goes out to him. And this, in moral things, is not the programme that attracts. We acknowledge it to be necessary to obey—some time, but not yet. If the great and awful thought of what we might be forces us to the life of moral struggle, then let us escape from it with all decent speed; let us 'behold ourselves, and go away, and straightway forget what manner of men we be.'

Now, we cannot go playing with the facts of God's ministries like that. If we like to escape from the vision of our ideal, we can escape; with this penalty, that finally it will escape from us. As it returns, it returns more faintly and more blurred, until finally, maybe, it returns not at all.

In these circumstances, James has two vivid

pieces of advice. They are simple, direct, not distinguished for insight into the springs of action, maybe; but nevertheless, by God's grace, actable upon.

(1) First of all, says he, do not yield to the tendency to put the thought of the ideal away. 'He that looketh into the perfect law, the law of liberty and so continueth, being not a hearer that forgetteth, but a doer that worketh, this man shall be blessed in his doing.' That is to say, get a clear vision of the outlines of the kind of man you want to be; and they, faced up to as an ideal, will, by their own worth, draw you to strive. Let us admit that there are certain virtues which are quite clear to us as virtues, as, for instance, diligence, chastity, and that which comes under the word chivalry or 'gentlemanhood.' The advice is that we should make the search for these a matter of definite decision. *That* at least can be done. Once that is done, we are in possession of what are known as 'principles.' Waste of time is against our principles; uncleanness is against our principles; meanness, lying, and the dishonourable generally are against our principles. A man who has fixed 'principles' of that sort has been looking in the perfect law and so continuing.

And you must get hold of principles of that sort, or down you go. Be lazy; and, as sure as this is a working world, you are done. Be unclean; and, as sure as God is a power making for holiness, you are done. Be unworthy; and, as sure as society is built on mutual trust, you are done. Principles you must have; and they are queer things, are principles. Get them young, or you may sigh for them in vain.

And then these principles need to be applied to daily acts. And here's the rub. We all have principles. How to apply them is the question. Here again James has worthy advice. You apply them by applying them, says he. You act on them by acting on them, says he. Simply stand up and do, says James. Take the common duty of work. The armchair is very delightful; and the newspaper is more interesting than certain works prevalent in a University. But it is downright absurd to say that we cannot get out of the armchair and down to the desk. We can, if we will. The rigid application of the will can do a deal. Certainly temptations are very strong; but it is possible to do something else. The word that needs to be spoken to many of us is not 'trust; and God will do this for you'—but 'do not be an invertebrate caricature of a man; sit up and do it for yourself.' Let us remember that to claim to be admirers of good, and desirers of God, and followers of Christ, and never to be making genuine effort towards good and after Christ is that unpleasant thing that men call cant.

(2) But, that is not quite all that James has to say. He indicates that the man who is making strong effort towards the good has come into a law of liberty. That is to say, he is in touch with a power that makes him want to obey and gives him a sense of freedom in his slavery to the good. And that power is God in him. The ideal that he has set before him has God in it. It finally is given to him in Divine form in Jesus Christ. In himself a great Spirit moves. So God within him urges him on to God without him and aids his resolute will up and onwards, until his life is hid with Christ in God. The whole matter lies in a nutshell. Seek goodness with your whole soul, and God Himself secures your victory.[1]

Law and Liberty.

Ja. i. 25.—'The perfect law, the law of liberty' (RV).

'THE perfect law, the law of liberty.' It is a striking and a memorable phrase. James has been denouncing the men who prate about their faith without any sense of the tremendous moral obligations which their faith lays upon them. They are men in whom the familiarity of outward profession has deprived the truth which they profess of all authority over their conscience. James compares them to men who look at their own natural face in the mirror—they are accustomed to it; it

[1] J. R. P. Sclater, *The Enterprise of Life*, 187ff.

excites no attention, they pass by and forget it. And he contrasts the heedlessness of those who thus prate of their faith and neglect their conscience with the experience of earnest and honest men who see over them a law, august and majestic, demanding their obedience. They look into it, it arrests their attention, it claims their homage; having once seen it they cannot forget it; they continue with the consciousness of its claim upon them, and they find that it is a perfect law because it is a law of liberty. They fulfil their faith when they submit themselves to the law.

The word 'perfect' is a favourite one with the Apostle James. When he exhorts in this chapter to patience, it is, 'But let patience have her *perfect* work, that ye may be *perfect* and entire, wanting nothing.' And speaking of the proper regulation of the tongue, in the third chapter, he says, 'If any man offend not in word, the same is a *perfect* man.' In the text he directs our attention to 'the *perfect* law, the law of liberty.' Now it is usual for men to oppose these two terms one to another—to set law against liberty, and liberty against law. Hence so much of the wickedness and the misery, oppression and revolt, that are in human society—law against liberty; liberty against law. But the Apostle conjoins these two thoughts—liberty and law—perfect law and perfect liberty. A perfect law of liberty can be found only under a perfect sovereign with a perfect law—that is, God alone.'

1. It is essential in a free country that the law should be in accordance with liberty; it must not be arbitrarily imposed upon men without the response of their own conscience. In its provisions the law of a free country will be expressive of the best conscience of the whole community. In its administration it will be sensitive to keep in touch with the public conscience. It is of the utmost importance that the law should never come into collision with anything that represents the reasonable conscience of a large section of the community.

On the other hand, it is essential to a free country that its liberty should be based upon the homage paid to its law. Where the law represents the best conscience of the people, a free people will give it the sort of ready respect which a man ought to pay to his own conscience. He will not regard it as a thing that is strange; rather, he will regard it as a thing that trains and educates and deepens his own moral life. He will give his consent to it; he will pay free homage to it, for it is representative to him of the public right and conscience. And so a free people will always surround their legal system with all outward signs of dignity and honour; they will jealously protect its impartial administration; they will resent any contempt of its dignity.

How emphatic the teaching of the New Testament is upon this subject. We recall, for example, the words of Paul: 'Let every soul be in subjection to the higher powers; for there is no power but of God; and the powers that be are ordained of God. . . . Wherefore ye must needs be in subjection . . . for conscience sake.' A free citizen will look up to the law of his State and will see it standing over him with the dignity of the long-trained public conscience, representing the majesty of the moral law of God Himself. Its impressiveness will be engraven upon his mind. He will give it free assent and continue under it.

¶ In the United States to-day probably the most obvious lawlessness with which we deal is the breaking of the Eighteenth Amendment and its enacting laws. If someone insists that the passage of the Eighteenth Amendment was not wise the answer may be assent. One may hate the liquor traffic and desire its obliteration, and yet may feel sure that had we gone on for a decade more with our local-option campaigns and their associated programmes of education we should have been further on toward real temperance and ultimate prohibition than we are now.

Nevertheless, the attempt summarily to put down the liquor traffic at one stroke is on our statute books. It is the law, and no man can convincingly maintain that the majority of the people did not want it there. To say that is to vest our senators and representatives with ideal virtues quite beyond their just

desert. It involves picturing them as men of such valiant and sacrificial devotion to total abstinence that in the face of a popular majority, at the risk of losing their seats, they insisted, out of their own impatient idealism, on passing the prohibitory laws and keeping them on the books against all protests. One who believes that must have the innocence of an infant. The truth is that many votes were cast for prohibition, not because our senators and representatives believed in it themselves, but because they well knew that a majority of the people did.

It is undoubtedly justifiable at times to break the law. My grandfather broke one—the Fugitive Slave Law. He deliberately transgressed a Federal enactment which made it illegal to assist an escaping slave to liberty. On stormy nights, aroused by a signal on the windowpane, he would rise and go out to row boatloads of fleeing slaves across the Niagara River into Canada. He conscientiously broke a Federal law because he thought that he ought to obey God rather than men.

Does anyone maintain, however, that bootlegging represents any such self-denying devotion to Christian principles, that folk are drinking hooch as a sacrificial libation to their high ideals? Recently I saw a man breaking the law. He was proclaiming aloud his right to personal liberty. He had had so much of it that he was not lucid and logical in his argument, but it was obvious that he was endeavouring to cloak transgression of law under the sacred right to personal freedom. One who watched him, however, laboured under the strong suspicion that he broke the law, not really for conscience's sake, but for appetite's sake!

It is one thing to put God above law. Once in a great while that may be solemnly, sacrificially necessary. But to put appetite for hard liquor above law is another matter. And the shame of the present situation is that the law is not being chiefly outraged by poor people; it is not they who are supporting half the population of the West Indies. Our lawlessness is mainly the work of men of means, prestige, and influence, who ought to know better.[1]

2. But the lesson taught by James is of value for us as individual men rather than as citizens; and, indeed, we know well enough that the nation is nothing but what the moral life of its individual members at any time shall make it. Let us then turn to the individual aspect of the truth of the text. How shall we estimate it? The habit that has been created in man's life by the error of which these words of James' are the compressed refutation—what is that error? It is that a man's freedom consists in liberty to do what he pleases with his life and opportunity. That is, indeed, the first and fundamental lie. We study the story in the Old Testament about the fall of man, and we see more and more how wonderfully it discerns the true cause of human sin and failure. There, in that old story, we have two conceptions of freedom: the one true and the other false. The true one is that man was made free to submit himself to the law and will of God; the false one is that man can use his freedom to transgress the law of God. Man has proved unworthy of God's own ideal of his freedom; it has been too high for him; he has betaken himself to the false conception, and sin is nothing but the abuse of God's gift of freedom. 'Sin,' says John, in his profound and trenchant way, 'sin is lawlessness.' Whenever in man's heart there are the germs of the persuasion that freedom consists in the power to do as he likes with the gifts, the talents, the passions, the pleasures that come to him in his life, there are the germs within him out of which sin rears its brood of disaster and of shame. It is true of States and of men that this false freedom proves its falsity by inevitably resulting in slavery—slavery to the law of passion and appetites which God gave us our will to control and redeem and use in obedience to His law. There is often very much truth in our common ways of speech. Reflect on the lesson contained in these common phrases: 'He

[1] H. E. Fosdick, *Twelve Tests of Character*, 110.

is a slave to drink,' He is a slave to gambling,' 'He has lost his self-control.' They teach us that our own words condemn us if we forget it. They teach us that self-control, self-mastery, come only through the control and mastery over us of the law of God freely accepted and loyally obeyed.

¶ We are free not as children but as men. It is not, it cannot be, a freedom to do evil: that is the freedom of a beast that knows no law, or of a savage scarcely higher than a beast. It is not a freedom to follow the pleasures of the moment, the promptings of each bent of our mind, of each instinct or interest as it arises; for that is not freedom, but anarchy. . . .

It might have seemed needless to say this. It might have seemed that no one could have so mistaken the meaning or degraded the name of freedom, as to call that freedom which is but a licence to do wrong, a rebellious defiance against God. But it is not so. At this hour, in the talk of many foolish men, and in weak and wicked books, this mean and false teaching is only too common. 'A man's nature must have full play,' they say, or 'Man was not meant to be too innocent,' or 'Wide experience of evil makes a deeper character,' or 'Great souls have sinned and suffered.' With such shallow lies or half-truths as these would they mislead the ignorant: as though it were manly, and not bestial, to lose command of ourselves: as though it were higher and not lower to treat with equal indulgence the bad and good impulses of our hearts: as though any experience to be gained by sin could for a moment compare with that diviner insight and that profounder wisdom that is only the reward of innocence.

Let no man think that, if he ever relaxes in his struggles after duty, and gives the rein to lower impulses, it is in any sense a freedom that he gains. Our nature is made up of conflicting elements, which *cannot* all be free. It is a struggle within us, whether the lower shall be set above the higher, or the higher above the lower. We must have in our souls, whether we will or no, either the dominion of the good, which is freedom, or the dominion of the evil, which is the basest bondage. There cannot be a worse fate upon earth than his who leaves the guidance of his actions to the instinct or the feeling of the moment. He has let go the rudder of his life, and the shifting gales or currents will carry him whither they please, till at last he sees himself drifting out of sight of all that makes life worth living and is powerless to help it. But he who never slacks his hand in steadfast discipline of self shall find, as life advances, all fetters of weakness and of passion drop off, till he stands as a *man* before God, and the least call of duty is eagerly obeyed, and his heart is set in that service which is the only perfect freedom.[1]

¶ That brilliant American banker, Mr. Philip Cabot, whose years at Harvard were followed by years of successful activity in the world of finance, has given to the public a notable document of religious experience in the astonishing little book *Except Ye Be Born Again*. To quote words used by Mr. Cabot, 'I was a rationalist until I was fifty and have been a mystic since. . . . I acted upon the theory that I could manage my own life, that free will had been given me to use, and that the guiding hand of a living God, which might be useful to weaker souls, was something which I could get along without. The result in my case was disease of body and atrophy of soul, and I say to you with profound conviction that if you take the same road you will reach the same destination.[2]

3. We look into that perfect law, the law of liberty, and we find that it comes home to us and near to us in the constraining personality of Jesus of Nazareth. There, in that perfect life, is manifested the perfect law, the fusion of law and liberty. Watch His figure as it passes before us in the gospel; there is there the very strength and mastery and independence of the free man. He has a purpose set before Him; He moves toward it with calm decisiveness; nothing can obstruct Him. The hatred of man, the betrayal of His friends, the force of secular power—all these rise

[1] A. Sidgwick, *School Homilies*, i. 168.
[2] L. H. Hough, *Evangelical Humanism*, 9.

against Him; but He stands apart from them serene and calm. He seems to be the slave of circumstances; yet we know He is their Master. See Him before Pilate. When Pilate says to Him, 'Knowest thou not that I have power to release thee, and power to crucify thee?' Jesus answered him, 'Thou wouldest have no power against me, except it were given thee from above.' Hear the words that He speaks in the garden: 'Thinkest thou that I cannot beseech my Father, and he shall even now send me more than twelve legions of angels? How then should the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?' That freedom is due to His submission to the Divine necessity. 'Lo, I come to do thy will, O God.' 'Not my will, but thine be done.' That was the basis of His life. The iron of the Divine necessity had entered into His soul and bound Him fast, and because He had accepted it He was free, He stayed Himself on the unfailing security of the Divine Will. And so for us the perfect law, the law of liberty, has been made flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen it in the Perfect Life made manifest.

The Law of Liberty.

Ja. i. 25.—'The perfect law, the law of liberty' (RV).

1. 'THE law of liberty'—that sounds at first like a contradiction. What is law but a limiting of liberty? What is liberty but an escape from law? Law shuts you in; liberty lets you out. The law of the state restricts the liberty of the citizen; the laws of Nature hamper the freedom of the will. How, then, can the Apostle say that the perfect law brings liberty? He means that the only real liberty in life is to be found, not outside of law, but through it. A country without law—the country of the anarchist—is not necessarily a free country. It may be, on the contrary, a place of the most savage despotism. A world without law would not necessarily give greater play to the freedom of man. On the contrary, it would be simply a chaos of disorder, where there would be no scope for liberty. What, then, is the relation of liberty to law? It is this—that while some laws shut in and enslave life, other laws broaden and enlarge life. One is set free as he passes from one kind of law to the other. Liberty is allegiance to the higher law.

(1) We speak, for instance, of a free country. What is a free country? Not a country where people may do just as they please. A country may put people in prison and yet be a free country. It may restrict or prohibit certain forms of business and yet be a free country. Its liberty is not a liberty without law. It is a free country because its laws give every citizen a chance to do his best. There is, not equality of condition, but equality of opportunity. The transfer from the lower to the higher rules of life is easy. In so far as the State does this it is a free State. Its law is a law of liberty.

(2) Or we speak, again, of a liberal education. What is a liberal, or liberating, education? It is not an education without law. On the contrary, the liberally educated man has submitted himself to discipline and learned the scope and authority of law. Intellectual liberty means freedom from sordid, commercial, or disingenuous views of life, and the transfer of interest and loyalty to permanent ideals of truth or goodness or beauty. In so far as one has thus transferred his allegiance from narrowing and shifting interests to broadening and ideal interests, he is liberally educated. He has found the law of liberty.

2. But the Apostle in this passage is not writing of politics or of education. He is writing of religion; and he is describing just what religion undertakes to do. Here you are, he means to say, all shut in by the small laws of life, and its petty, engrossing, enslaving interests, so that your life seems to have no scope or vision or quality about it, and you need to get up into the region of some higher law, where you can look out more broadly over life.

¶ I heard a while ago of a club in one of our great cities called the A.B.C. This rather elementary title had been taken from one of

Henry Drummond's suggestions, that people ought to live, as he said, in the 'upper stories'; and these young people, who were wanting to live for something higher than their merely social round of pleasure and companionship, called themselves 'The Anti-Basement Club.' It was their pledge of transfer to higher levels of life; as if they had heard the great word of the parable: 'Friend, go up higher!'

But when one thus accepts the principle of the A.B.C. and goes into the 'upper stories' of life, what is the law that meets him there? It is the law of liberty. Sometimes we wonder precisely what our religion does for us. It does not answer all our questions; it does not feed us or support us or free us from trouble and care. Well, then, what does it do? It gives us a law of liberty. It sets us free from the lower instincts which threaten to master our lives. God comes to a human soul and says: 'My son, give me thine heart'; and in that allegiance to the higher law the petty interests and cares which were dominating life let go their hold, and the soul enters into the law of liberty. What is the problem of life but just this transfer of the heart's desire from the shut-in sense of routine, from the basement of life, to the refreshment and strength of the clearer, higher air; and what is liberty except the exhilarating emancipation of that new ideal?

> The freer step, the fuller breath,
> The wide horizon's grander view,
> The sense of life that knows no death,
> The Life that maketh all things new.

Sometimes there happens on the ocean an experience, entirely familiar to sailors, which always has in it something beautiful and strange. A vessel, some day, is lying, as seamen say, stark-becalmed, powerless to reach her harbour; but, as the sailors wait and watch, they notice that while there is no ripple on the water or breeze upon their faces, the little pennant far up at the mast-head begins to stir and ripple out. The breeze is all aloft, they say. It does not strike down upon the surface of the sea. At once they spread their upper sails, to catch the current which is all unfelt below, and very quietly, straight across a sea which looks hopelessly flat and calm, the vessel holds right on under the impulse of that upper air. So, sometimes, the spirit of God moves over the lives of men; 'All powerful as the wind' it comes, 'as viewless too,' and in the lower levels of life all is still motionless. You seem to be under the dominion of a law which chains you in its flat and dull monotony. You feel no breath of the spirit on your cheek. But aloft is stirring the current of the higher law; and the life that spreads its upper sails finds itself borne along as by a miracle across the flatness of life, under the breeze which is at once both Law and Liberty.'[1]

The Joy of Obedience.

Ja. i. 25.—'Whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein . . . this man shall be blessed in his deed.'

James has just been speaking about a man looking at himself in a mirror. Now he changes the figure to something that is deep, profound and spiritual. He says that he that looketh into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and so continueth, being not a hearer that forgetteth, but a doer that worketh, this man shall be blessed in his doing.

1. James was a Jew, with deep Jewish sympathies. And he could never conceive of religion as being anything other than a law. But it is a very different law from the Mosaic law. The Mosaic law told the people what to do, but apparently did not assist them in the performing of it.

It is just here that we begin to get light on what James meant by the perfect law of liberty. The Mosaic law, and for that matter any other law, says, Do this, and do that, and does not give power to carry it through. But the law of liberty, which is the perfect

[1] F. G. Peabody, *Afternoons in the College Chapel*, 71ff.

law, and also the law of love, tells us what to do, and accompanies the instruction with the power necessary for the doing of it.

The Volstead law tells us, in substance, that we are not to drink strong drink; but it does not take from the drinking man his propensity to drink. The law tells the kleptomaniac not to steal, but it does not cure him of his propensity to steal. But this law of which James is speaking tells us what we ought to do, and offers a very present help to assist us in carrying out its injunctions.

That is what the passage seems to mean. If so, it contains the heart of the gospel. If the Bible teaches anything, it is the new birth. And in being born again, in regeneration, we are given a new spirit. All things of the carnal life are to pass away, and all things are to become correspondingly new. We are to put off the old man with his deeds, and put on the new man.

Now, it is in this change in our disposition and in our nature that we enter into this perfect law of liberty. And so the Christian keeps the law because he likes to keep it, wants to keep it, loves to keep it. With the Psalmist such an one can say, 'I delight to do thy will, O my God.' And the soul who has come to the place where the thing which God wants him to do is the very thing which he himself wants to do—that soul is enfranchised, is free, and is living in the perfect law, which is the law of liberty.

No one would think of telling the normal mother to love and care for her own child, for that is the one thing above everything else that she wants to do and loves to do. No one would think of telling the little feathered creatures of the tree to fly and to shake melodies from their throats, for it is their nature to do just this. And the man who is passed from death unto life, and has his affections centred on Christ, cannot but love and adore Him, because now it is his nature to do so.

2. Being in this perfect law of liberty is the only condition that can ever bring us joyousness in service. A man never will find pleasure in doing what he does not like to do. But the thing he loves, the thing which fascinates him, will ever bring unbounded joy to him. The only kind of Christian who has the joy of salvation is the Christian who is embedded in this law of which James speaks and in which he has his delight. There is a great gulf fixed between the man who tries to do Christ's will because he wants to do so and the man who attempts it because he is afraid not to do it.

But the man who lives in the perfect law of liberty moves out in the Christian life actuated by the new nature which has been implanted within him. He does not read the Scripture just because we are told to search the Scriptures, because in them we think we have eternal life; he does not go to church merely because we are told not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together; and he does not pray because it is expected of us that we will pray—he does all these things because he loves to do them, delights to do them, and has come to find it his nature to do these things.

This is the spirit of the 'second mile.' It is the spirit of Christ. And inevitably the Christian who moves along these high lines of service is a happy Christian; for the commandments are no longer burdensome to him, they have come to be his chief delight.[1]

¶ Some Christians carry their religion on their backs. It is a packet of beliefs and practices which they must bear. At times it grows heavy and they would willingly lay it down, but that would mean a break with old traditions, so they shoulder it again. But real Christians do not carry their religion, their religion carries them. It is not weight; it is wings. It lifts them up, it sees them over hard places, it makes the universe seem friendly, life purposeful, hope real, sacrifice worth while. It sets them free from fear, futility, discouragement, and sin—that great enslavers of men's souls. You can know a real Christian, when you see him, by his buoyancy.[2]

[1] C. H. Dickey.
[2] H. E. Fosdick, *Twelve Tests of Character*, 87.

The Unbridled Tongue.

Ja. i. 26.—'If any among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain.'

THERE was an experience in life which had been very much burnt into the mind of James —the danger of sinning with the tongue. We do not know exactly why this danger was so much in his thoughts. But it was so, for he comes back to the theme presently and calls the tongue a world of iniquity, an untameable evil, as uncontrollable and mischievous as a fire in a prairie or in a western forest. Here he goes no further than to say that people who do not control their tongue have no genuine religion though they may think they have. But that is a strong thing to say: to most of us it will seem a paradox, or at least an exaggeration. It is worth examining then. Let us look, and see if James is making a mistake. Can the tongue be so important a part of us that its right or wrong use decides whether our religion is real or vain?

1. There comes to one's mind that word of Jesus that the things which defile a man are not those which enter into him, as the meats and drinks which Jews thought mattered so much, but the things which come from within a man and out of him, That which is in the heart, and comes out of it, that defiles a man. Now what is the chief channel by which the evil that may be in the heart comes out of it? Is it not the mouth? 'Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.' Of whatever kind the abundance of the heart may be, wisdom or folly, love or malice, reverence or wantonness, the man's speech is the outflow of that abundance, a stream bitter or sweet, foul or clear, as the inner fountain may be. The very word for the use of speech reminds us of this: we call it 'utterance,' that is, 'outerance,' making outward something that was within us. If, then, the tongue utters us, our talk is the indicator of character, the revealer of what is in the spirit, the register of the goodness or badness in it. Not only so, it is also a most true revealer, a most sensitive register. A great deal of man's evil (and goodness too) never gets the opportunity of being displayed in an act; the circumstances of his life possibly give no opportunity of realizing that which he has thought and felt —social pressure, want of time, or the police, check the impulse short of an act. But almost all a man's badness can get unchecked as far as his tongue. Surely that is one reason why 'by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.'

Well may I shrink to wake, and on me find
For a whole day the gift of speech conferred,
The choice of time, the choice of thought behind,
The choice of—every word![1]

2. But that is not all. The tongue does not only register character, it does not only mark as on a dial-face the degree of the bad or the good within us. The thermometer can only tell us the temperature of a room, the barometer informs us of the condition of the atmosphere: these instruments cannot alter facts. But this register of human temper, this 'ethometer,' not only indicates, it also reacts upon the temper. Men say that the word written abides, while the word spoken perishes on the air. It may be partly so in law and business. It is not so in life. The word spoken does abide; its effect is a permanent one. When we utter a thought we give body to what till then was a vapour, when we speak out a resolve we fix it, when we give words to the mood of our spirit we stereotype it. It may be true that sometimes free speech appears to dissipate an irritation or a discontent instead of increasing it, and that sometimes by talking about what they mean to do people forget to do it. But that on the whole the utterance of a feeling gives it more force is admitted by statesmen, and by those who check seditious speeches. And does anyone pretend that a man becomes more charitable by uttering his spite, or more reverent by loosing a

[1] Winifred Lucas.

profanity, or cleaner-minded by venting his vileness? Here, then, is the grand reason why bridling the tongue is a great matter in religion; it is that the tongue not only makes the inward evil plain to see, it makes it stronger too.

¶ Words rule our lives. They define our conduct and determine all our actions. These impalpable, intangible symbols, that cannot be weighed or measured, transcend in importance all material things. Words are sharper than the sword and swifter than the lightning flash. They stir us to action and goad us to despair. Their touch is a caress, a sting or a blow. They excite every passion of which the human heart is capable—love, hate, anger, fierce resentment or dull despair. Yet words are as unsubstantial as thistledown, as slender as the gossamer thread that drifts and shimmers in the morning sun, as fragile as the petal of a rose.[1]

3. There is still more to say on James' side—'bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart' are his words. The sin of the tongue is one about which self-deceit is the easiest. 'Words are not deeds,' people tell themselves, and therefore they are nothing: on the score of virtue words do not count. 'Words are wind,' says a proverb, empty wind. But perhaps if we would remember how mere wind, empty wind, can blight a harvest, or carry a pestilence, or wreck a ship on the high seas, we should have more respect for wind and for words. We might come to see that a word may be a deed, and a very weighty one; may blacken a character, or cross a career, or set a family at war, or ruin a business, or blight a prospective friendship, or start a brother's soul downhill. Meanwhile we find it easy to tell ourselves that in moral conduct words do not count. It is just that self-deceit which helps sins of the tongue, in the making and marring of character, to count for so very much.

¶ He was incapable of speaking evil of others and constantly recalled those who indulged in it to a higher level of Christian love. Years ago I remember his taking, at considerable inconvenience, a long journey to see a well-known lady who had been speaking in a slighting manner of a young friend of his who was asked to address the undergraduates at Cambridge. He represented to the elder woman how serious was the evil of such a course and how injurious it was to the cause of Christ. We may mention also an incident which occurred during a visit to Vienna. A story was related to him against a well-known diplomatist whom he believed to be a Christian. 'I will go and tell him what you say,' was his only comment on the accusation. 'Oh no, not for the world,' came the quick reply to this suggestion. Then patiently and earnestly Lord Radstock pointed out to the accuser how unworthy of Christ was all evil speaking. It is interesting to notice that this action resulted in a breaking down and reconciliation.[1]

When over the fair fame of friend or foe
  The shadow of disgrace shall fall; instead
Of words of blame, or proof of thus and so,
  Let something good be said.

Forget not that no fellow-being yet
  May fall so low but love may lift his head:
Even the cheek of shame with tears is wet
  If something good be said.

No generous heart may vainly turn aside
  In ways of sympathy, no soul so dead
But may awaken strong and glorified,
  If something good be said.

And so I charge you, by the thorny crown,
  And by the cross on which the Saviour bled,
And by your own soul's hope of fair renown,
  Let something good be said.

[1] R. M. Lucey, *From Hour to Hour*, 141.

[1] Mrs. Edward Trotter, *Lord Radstock*, 118.

Religion.

Ja. i. 27.—'Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.'

It is true of words, as of people, that with the course of time some become poorer and others richer. This word 'religion,' for example, has rather gained than lost since our Bible was translated. At that period it was applied more to the external forms of religion than to its inner spirit. We use it now in a somewhat enlarged sense. When we speak of a man being religious we do not limit the thought to that part of his life which is engaged in matters of outward worship; we refer to his character generally as imbued with the religious spirit.

1. The Apostle James uses the word in the sense of *outward worship*, which was its meaning in the language in which he wrote. But his purpose is to give it a deeper meaning. He is alluding to those who imagined that it mattered little what they were if only they paid sufficient attention to religious observances. He applies the rebuke to people who had no conscience about the way in which they used their tongues. Their words might be envious, passionate, or slanderous; but they excused themselves by the reflection that no fault could be found with their scrupulous regard to religious duties. 'If any man thinketh himself to be religious, while he bridleth not his tongue but deceiveth his heart, this man's religion is vain.'

It is vain because, whilst the forms of religion are observed, its spirit is violated. Such unlicensed use of the tongue shows that the heart is deceived. The man is living in a delusion. He takes a part of life for the whole. He does not see that what he calls religion is only its shell wanting the kernel. So the Apostle James proceeds in the words of our text to give an account of wherein lies the essence of true religion. It consists not in forms of worship, but in character. We cannot tell what a man's religion is by merely seeing him in church; we must see him in the ordinary intercourse of life. It is there that God judges him; it is there that God takes an estimate of what his religion is worth.

The expression 'before God' simply means, as shown in other passages, 'with God'—that is, in God's estimation. There is no religion but that of which God approves. It has regard to His mind, and is never satisfied without a real approach to Himself. What is falsely called religion is impure and defiled, because it is carried on only under the eye of man, and because it seeks only man's approval. Its motives are impure; its desires are defiled. Its aim is to get a reputation for piety, and its desire is to make that reputation in some way a means of temporal advancement. Pure religion, on the other hand, issues out of a heart that has been clarified from the base motives of self-interest. It is undefiled because its desires go forth to God Himself, the Infinite, the Holy One.

¶ At the head of the Lake of Geneva the difference in colour between the river that rushes into it and its own clear waters is interesting. The river brings from the mountain quantities of sediment that give it a turbid appearance, whilst the lake into which it flows brightly reflects the sun's rays. It is a picture of what we are by nature and of what we may become by grace. As our life flows on it is dark with the impurities contracted in its course; but when we truly come into contact with God, these impurities begin to disappear. From Villeneuve at the head of the lake go to the town of Geneva at the other end, and what do you see? The river issuing out of it in a very different state from that in which it entered.[1]

True religion, then, brings us first of all into a right relation with God, then into a right relation to our neighbours; last of all, into a right relation with ourselves.

2. We have to think of what we owe to our neighbours as expressed in the words 'to visit

[1] P. W. Minto, *Memorials*, 144.

the fatherless and widows in their affliction.' The sorrows of the world are infinitely varied. The fatherless and widows are here singled out as examples specially of sorrow in its helplessness calling for aid. These are to be visited. The word of course is not to be limited to paying calls. It means simply to have a regard to, to look after, to be concerned about. This may be done in different ways. We visit the sorrowing when we think of them, when we remember them in prayer, when we write letters to them, when we relieve them with money if they are in circumstances of want, and when, as opportunity occurs, we go to their homes.

Such sympathy with the sorrowing belongs to the essence of a religion that is pure and undefiled. It is akin to the nature of Him who is the Source of all true sympathy. 'A father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widows, is God in his holy habitation: 'He doth execute the judgment of the fatherless and widow.' Again, in one of the psalms, after lofty views of God as the Creator of the heavens and the earth, it is said, 'He relieveth the fatherless and widow.'

Pity is thus ascribed to God, and we know how in the New Testament that pity is revealed as the love of God for the redemption of the world. To be without pity is to be unlike God. To have no care for the destitute is to manifest a disposition that is contrary to the heart of God. God cannot be known, He cannot be loved, without something of His infinite pity entering our hearts. We may engage in the rites of religion and remain hard towards our fellow-men, but such hardness must needs pass away when we come into intercourse with God Himself. The river may pour forth its turbid streams into the clear lake, but it does not issue out of that lake as it entered it. It loses its foul elements, and becomes a river pure and undefiled whose waters may give drink to the thirsty.

O brother man! fold to thy heart thy brother;
Where pity dwells, the peace of God is there;
To worship rightly is to love each other,
Each smile a hymn, each kindly deed a prayer.

Follow with reverent steps the great example
Of Him whose holy work was 'doing good';
So shall the wide earth seem our Father's temple,
Each loving life a psalm of gratitude.[1]

3. There is not only sympathy with sorrow; there is separation from sin. 'Pure religion and undefiled,' the Apostle writes, is 'to keep himself unspotted from the world.' But what is meant by such separation? It is a separation moral, not artificial. In other words, moral, not artificial, sanctity is the true sign of Christian purity. Not the unsoiled hands are the surest witness to the stainless soul. Avoid all contact with the ceremonially unclean; eat no meat which Church laws have tabooed; fly from the world to some secluded haunt fenced off from all profane contiguities—not thus will you best prove your purity or preserve it unsullied. Holiness is something nobler than innocence, grander than the cowardly spotlessness of isolation. He alone can be called pure who, living where duty calls him, amidst the throng and thoroughfare of life, surrounded by temptations, breathing the atmosphere of its sins and sorrows, yet keeps the mirror of a blameless soul, unruffled by the passions, unspotted by the vices, of the world.

¶ The reader of the New Testament finds varied and urgent warnings in its pages against conformity to the world. Men are bidden to fight against it, to be on the watch against its machinations and allurements, to regard it as under the control of the Evil One. But we must bear in mind that this world against which so many warnings are given is not the ordered society of mankind concerned with its business and pleasures and making the most of its powers of temporal satisfaction. Such a world must be used as the appointed sphere of our education, though always care is to be taken that it be made our servant and not our master. The Chris-

[1] Whittier.

tian man must live in it, and being in it there is no reason for abstention from its interests. It affords him many opportunities of service. The perils to which it brings him serve to the development of his moral powers. Acquiring its rewards, he can devote them to purposes above its own reach. But he may not be content only to take what he finds in the world, he has to give something to it in fulfilment of his life's duty. Indeed, it is only through the agency of devout men that the world can be saved from itself, for in spite of its instinct of self-preservation it would collapse by the action of its distintegrating forces but for the wholesome influence of faithful men who preserve it from dissolution by bringing to it powers which it cannot secure for itself.[1]

¶ William Wilberforce lived his parliamentary life as a contemporary of William Pitt, Edmund Burke, Charles James Fox, and Richard Brinsley Sheridan. Here was a galaxy of brilliance—the most polished and powerful orators who ever awoke the classic echoes of St. Stephen's! Wilberforce's figure conveyed the inevitable impression of insignificance. Yet when he rose to address the Commons the House instantly crowded. Members held their breaths to listen. The little reformer spoke with an authority rarely wielded by the greatest masters. He was heard in a silence, and with a respect, which were never accorded to those illustrious statesmen whose utterances are to this day read in schools and colleges as models of rhetoric. And why? There is only one reason for it. Like Sir Galahad—

> His strength was as the strength of ten,
> Because his heart was pure.[2]

[1] *Life's True Values: Selected Essays from* 'The Times,' i. 215.

[2] F. W. Bereham, *The Luggage of Life*, 130.

Ritual.

Ja. i. 27.—'Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this' . . .

This is not a favourite text with evangelical Christians. It is, it must be confessed, rather puzzling. If it were not in the Bible, we should brand the statement as unorthodox and untrue. Surely pure religion and undefiled is to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and so to be saved! Surely it is a very impure, mixed, erroneous conception of religion that makes it consist merely in visiting orphans and widows, and keeping oneself unspotted from the world. Is not this the doctrine of salvation by works, when the truth is that we are justified by faith and *not* by works?

On the other hand, the text is very popular with those who would eliminate the miraculous and sublime from Christianity—who would take out of it the Divinity of Christ and the blood of the Cross, and leave only a code of morals. 'Here,' they say, 'is our proof-text. Religion is only morality. Everything else is either symbolism or superstition. When we go to the root of the matter, we find that pure religion and undefiled is to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep ourselves unspotted from the world.'

But what does the Apostle James mean by 'religion'? For it is a very comprehensive word indeed, and may be used in a bewildering variety of senses. It sometimes denotes the entire body of institutions, customs, doctrines, history belonging to a given faith, as in 'the religions of Asia.' Again, it signifies the conduct or practice which becomes a given profession of faith, as when we distinguish theology and religion, the one term denoting the truths or doctrines believed, the other the life in which they are expressed or realized. Then, religion may mean a system of duty apprehended as commanded by God or due to Him, as distinguished from morality, the system of duty discovered and determined by conscience and reason. Again, it may mean the mode in which a man elects to make

profession of his belief, with its corresponding ideal of life, as when men who would claim to be Christians are distinguished as religious and secular, as within or without an order of religion. Once more, religion may denote either the worship or the spirit it ought to express, as when we speak on the one hand of the rites of religion, or on the other distinguish profession and religion. These ambiguities belong to our English term, but in no way to the term James employs. That had a simple and precise enough meaning; it denoted the *cultus*, the external worship, the ceremonial usages, the form or body in which the inward piety was articulated. The word must be interpreted through the established use. Religion was to James the service, the ceremonial, as it were, of the new faith, the mode in which its inward spirit and reverence was outwardly manifested and declared. It was the counterpart in the new economy of the rites and sacrifices which had characterized the old; the moral and spiritual service which Christ had made to displace and replace the sacerdotalism of Moses. It did not denote the whole of the Christian religion, only the manner and form of its manifestation, the character and sphere of its distinctive and visible worship.

We have an English word that expresses exactly the meaning of James's term. We have a word which conveys precisely the sense in which the word 'religion' is used by his translators. It is 'ritual.' 'Ritual' is a term that describes the forms and ceremonies of religion. What James really says is, 'Pure *ritual* and undefiled . . . is to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.' So here is the true body of religion distinguished from the false.

James lived in a day when the elaborate ceremonial of Judaism was in full vigour. The ritual of that ancient faith was very clearly defined. Prayers were said at stipulated hours every day; a lamb was offered morning and evening; sacrifices of birds, sheep, or oxen, were appointed for specified sins or particular causes for thanksgiving; great religious feasts were held three times in the year. Many of the Jewish Christians still scrupulously observed the regulations of this great system; but to those of true discernment its meaning was exhausted, and it had become a solemn farce. All these are now taught that 'pure ritual and undefiled' consists not in carefulness to avoid ceremonial uncleanness and readiness to fulfil priestly requirements, but in visiting the fatherless and widows in their affliction and keeping themselves unspotted from the world. Instead of thousands of rams and ten thousands of rivers of oil, the Lord requires of them to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with Himself.

In both ancient and modern times, we find that false religion consists in elaborate observances before, and valuable offerings to, the gods, completely apart from personal conduct. There is no relation between religion and morality, or religion and philanthropy. Religion shows itself in ceremonies and sacrifices, and if these are accompanied by impurity in life and harshness to the poor and needy, the man is not the less religious. Thus, the commonest charge brought against the early Christians was that they were atheists, because the heathen could not understand a religion which did not body itself forth in ritualistic observances. Yet, at the same time, the pagans bore frequent testimony to the purity and devotion of their lives. They were atheists—quite irreligious—because they did not bow and scrape and sacrifice lambs and bullocks, although they were very moral and philanthropic! Yes, for at that time, as in heathenism still, religion meant outward ceremonies, and had nothing whatever to do with purity of life or kindness of heart.

And so Christianity approves itself as the pure and undefiled religion, the relation inspired by God and the Father, in that it harmonizes our duty to God and our duty to man, making love to God inspire correctness and kindness of conduct, and making correctness and kindness in conduct the manifestation of love to God. Religion and morality, everywhere else divorced, are here united and united in the relation of soul and body. The

true faith has light for its garment: its very robe is righteousness.

¶ I am perfectly able to enjoy ritualism and æsthetic development of religious ceremony for the purpose of stirring emotion or 'amusement.' I value that word, so common amongst religious people abroad; the exclamation on your return from a Function is often: 'I hope *Monsieur s'est bien amusé.*' But directly the histrionic or æsthetic is spoken of as giving honour to God in any other respect than as edifying or 'amusing' His children, then I think the border-line of Truth has been transgressed. The true and highest ritual of Christian life is, as James says, 'to *visit the fatherless and widows* in their affliction, and to *make no alliance with* the world.'[1]

True Religion.

Ja. i. 27.—'Pure religion.'

THE learned and devout men to whose labour of love we owe the revised translation of the New Testament, while sometimes altering passages that might well have been left unaltered, have most unaccountably left untouched this verse, which, by reason of the changes in language, is no longer able to deliver its full message to the ordinary reader. As James wrote it, this verse is simply one of the grandest and most luminous in the whole Bible; but as it reads here it seems a mere repetition, weakening the force and obscuring the argument of the passage. More than all, it seems to be utterly inconsistent not only with the teaching of Christ and the other Apostles, but with that of James himself.

No passage in the Bible has been more thoroughly misunderstood than this. Men, having read what Paul says of faith in Christ, repentance, newness of life, justification, and sanctification, finding their reason baffled by these mysteries, and their practice condemned by these Divine ideals, experience a feeling of relief when they open their Bible at James and read this verse. 'See!' they cry. 'Here is something like sense at last. Here is an Apostle who does not lose both himself and his readers in the cloudland of mysticism, but treads the solid earth, and gives us a rational and sensible definition of religion: "kindness and purity of life." Faith, repentance, justification are mere phantoms, born of the heated brain of Apostles whom much theology had made mad.'

But this text does not determine what the nature of true religion is. It treats of the expression or manifestation of religion rather than of its essence, of its proper form rather than of its spirit or principle. The persons addressed were Jewish converts to Christianity who seem to have been disposed to attach undue importance to the external forms and observances of religious worship, and, if not to introduce into Christianity something of the elaborateness and sensuous splendour of their former faith, at any rate to identify religion too much with the exact performance of its outward rites and ceremonies. The word translated 'religion' means more properly what we understand by the terms 'worship' and 'ritual'; and the idea of the writer is, that it is not ceremonial observances but kind words and gentle deeds—sympathy, charity, purity—which constitute the true Christian ritual; in other words, that the most genuine expression of religion is to be found, not in special forms and acts of devotion, in observances which are always more or less technical and conventional, and which vary with the particular conditions of time and place; but in those moral acts which are universal as the common nature of man, and unchanging as his relations to his brother man and to God.

But in thus contrasting an imperfect with a higher and truer expression of religion, the text does not give us any direct insight into what religion in itself essentially is. Morality is a better manifestation of the principle of religion than ceremonial observances, but it is not that principle itself, nor even an infallible sign of it. For while the text implies that there can be no religion without morality, it

[1] R. W. Corbet, *Letters from a Mystic of the Present Day*, 129.

does not teach conversely that there can be no morality without religion. And in point of fact we know that the social and personal virtues here enumerated are not invariably the effects of religious principle.[1]

What, then, is the essence of religion itself? If morality is not religion, or even the infallible sign of its existence; if purity, charity, beneficence, integrity, if even a certain nobleness and elevation of character, though they may spring from a religious spirit, may also spring from a source far less profound, then the only way in which we can distinguish between them is by penetrating beneath the form, going deeper than the outward life, and ascertaining what the inward spirit or principle of that which we designate religion is. That which makes a man religious is some state, or attitude, or relation of his inner spiritual nature—what is sometimes called the 'state of his soul.' What, then, is that? Examining my own consciousness—what is that by the presence or absence of which I can determine whether or not I am a religious man?

Some make religion to consist essentially or mainly in *feeling*, whilst others make it to consist primarily in *knowledge*. In our relations to God, whether immediate, or through whatever means they begin and are carried on, there are certain feelings, emotions, aspirations, which are awakened within the devout heart; and, again, there are certain notions, ideas, doctrines, concerning God and Divine things which we form or accept as true. In which of these two kinds of experience does the essence of religion lie? Is it in either as distinguished from the other, or in a combination of the two? Is religion a thing of the head or of the heart? In order to be a religious man, is the indispensable thing soundness of creed, or depth and intensity of feeling—a correct system of doctrines, or a devout and ardent spirit? May we hold, on the one hand, that notwithstanding much error and inaccuracy of dogmatic belief, a man may still be a genuine Christian if the fire of devout and holy feeling burn within his breast; or, on the other hand, that, however cold, unimpassioned, unemotional a man's nature be, he must be regarded as a religious man if he knows and sincerely accepts all the articles of the Christian faith?

1. Now there are considerations, many and cogent, which seem to be fatal to the assertion that the main or indispensable thing in religion is accuracy of theological opinions; or, in other words, that in its ultimate principle or essence, religion is a thing of knowledge.

(1) In the first place, it may be urged that religion must be a thing attainable by all, and therefore cannot, like knowledge, be dependent on gifts and acquirements accessible only to a few. All need it; none can be saved without it. Science and philosophy are noble things. Literary and artistic culture and refinement are most desirable attainments—dignifying and beautifying life, and opening up to their possessor the springs of purest enjoyment. But they are not indispensable. It is possible to live and die without them, and there are thousands of men who must and do contrive to live tranquil, happy, and useful lives, to whom these blessings are but a name. But religion is something altogether different. It is no luxury or superfluity of life; it is itself the very life, the happiness, the salvation, of man, that without which existence is vanity and wretchedness, and death is darkness and horror, without which we cannot live, and dare not die. Its attainment cannot therefore be dependent on conditions which would render it the monopoly of a learned and cultured class, of acute or logical or philosophical minds. It must be a blessing not more accessible to these than to little children, to dull and feeble-minded and unlettered men.

Is the spirit of religion not where the little child breathes forth from stammering lips, at a mother's knee, its first prayer of wonder and awe and reverence to the great Father in Heaven? Yet need we ask, if this be religion, whether it is a religion that is independent of all theological lore? Is the essence of religion not where the weak, worn sufferer lies

[1] J. Caird, *University Sermons*, i. 1.

stretched on the bed of pain, incapable of the faintest approach to consecutive thought or intellectual effort, bereft of every other power save the power to love and pray, clinging with dying hands to the Christian's cross of hope? Or, have we never witnessed the unmistakable influence of religion in the life of many a humble follower of Christ—the influence of a faith which he could neither define nor defend; yet which made him strong for duty and submissive in trial, which softened care and sweetened joy, shed an atmosphere of dignity around coarse toils and rude, unpolished ways, and lifted him by converse with an infinite ideal above the narrow influences of a contracted sphere of life?

Some folk as can afford,
So I've heard say,
Sets up a sort of cross
Right in the garden way
To mind 'em of the Lord.

But I, when I do see
Thik apple tree
An' stoopin' limb
All spread wi' moss,
I think of Him
And how He talks wi' me.

I think of God
And how He trod
That garden long ago;
He walked, I reckon, to and fro
And then sat down
Upon the groun'
Or some low limb
What suited Him
Such as you see
On many a tree,
And on thik very one
Where I at set o' sun
Do sit and talk wi' He.

And, mornings too, I rise and come
An' sit down where the branch be low;
A bird do sing, a bee do hum,
The flowers in the border blow,
And all my heart's so glad and clear
As pools when mists do disappear:
As pools a-laughing in the light
When mornin' air is swep' an' bright,
As pools what got all Heaven in sight
So's my heart's cheer
When He be near.

He never pushed the garden door,
He left no footmark on the floor;
I never heard 'Un stir nor tread
And yet His Hand do bless my head,
And when 'tis time for work to start
I takes Him with me in my heart.

And when I die, pray God I see
At very last thik apple tree
An' stoopin' limb,
And think of Him
And all He been to me.[1]

(2) There is another thought pointing to the same conclusion. There is springing up in many devout minds the conviction that the principle of Christian fellowship cannot be an intellectual one, that that which makes Christians one must be something deeper and more comprehensive than agreement in a system of doctrines. Religion is eminently social. It is essentially the deepest bond of union between man and man. Whatever that be which makes a man a Christian, it should unite him to all Christians, to all good and religious men. No matter what our natural or acquired diversities, no matter what our deep hereditary distinctions, our individual or national genius and temperament, our age, or country, or class, our habits of thought and ways of looking at things, religion is that which should lift us above such distinctions, and bring us into perfect accord and unity of spirit.

At its first preaching Christianity broke upon a divided and distracted world—torn asunder by wars, broken up by sharp nationalities—in which the spirit of caste, of social and religious exclusiveness had struck deep root, and in which nation was severed from nation, class from class, and man from man, often by an intellectual and moral gulf which it seemed impossible to bridge over. And yet

[1] Anna Bunston.

to all these discordant elements Christianity proclaimed itself the all-uniting principle. 'Ye are all one in Christ Jesus.' In Christ 'there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all.' The descendant of Abraham, the heir of the covenant, the Jew steeped in national and religious exclusivism, a stranger to the softening influences of art and letters; the Greek, with his hereditary love of freedom and art, his worship of sensuous beauty, his delight in poetry and speculation; the Alexandrian philosopher, imbued with the notions of a strange and fantastic metaphysic, half allegory, half science; the Roman statesman or soldier, with his national reverence for law and order, his hard practical wisdom, his arrogant disdain for, yet contemptuous tolerance of, the religions of the subject nations; the rude barbarian from the banks of the Danube or the Rhine, his temperament savage as the primeval forests in which he roamed, his religious ideas the reflection of the bloody rites that were practised amidst them:—to each and all of these alike, divided in spirit by barriers more impossible than mountains and seas, remote in thought, feeling, mental character from each other as the inhabitants of different worlds, the preachers of the Cross could proclaim: 'Believe in Jesus Christ, and in the deepest centre of your spiritual being you will become one. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling.'

And still the announcement is the same. Christianity is the all-uniting element—that which has power to solve all distinctions, to heal all divisions, to bind together in loving fellowship minds the most heterogeneous, to breathe harmony and peace over a distracted world. Open your spirit to its benign influence, and with every other Christian spirit you will see eye to eye, and feel heart to heart. But if this be so, it is obvious that the bond of a union so comprehensive cannot be an intellectual one.

2. The irresistible conviction is winning its way into all candid and tolerant minds that the essential spirit of religion may exist under wide theological divergences; and that though good men may differ, and differ greatly, in doctrinal forms of belief, there is something deeper which unites them. The essence of religion is something more catholic than its creeds. The theological schools to which they belonged were very far apart, but who can doubt that between the religion of St. Bernard and Thomas à Kempis and Savonarola and Fénelon and Pascal, on the one hand, and the religion of Cranmer and Latimer and Jeremy Taylor and Hooker and Leighton, on the other, there was a deep and essential harmony? In modern times could dogmatic differences be wider than those which separated Newman from Arnold, or the author of *The Christian Year* from Frederick Robertson, or all of these from Chalmers and McCheyne; yet, can we hesitate to think that there is a something profounder than ecclesiastical and dogmatic differences, in which as religious, as Christian men, these good men were really at one? And could we get at that something,—call it spiritual life, godliness, holiness, self-abnegation, surrender of the soul to God, or, better still, love and loyalty to Christ as the one only Redeemer and Lord of the Spirit,—could we pierce deeper than the notions of the understanding to that strange, sweet, all-subduing temper and habit of spirit, that climate and atmosphere of heaven in a human breast, would not the essence of religion lie in that, and not in the superficial distinctions which kept these men apart?

Whenever in the heat of party feeling, amid the weary strifes and rivalries of sects and churches, we are tempted to indulge the spirit of theological or ecclesiastical exclusiveness, or to feel for intellectual error the indignation and hostility that should be reserved for sin, there is one thought that may well bring us to a better mind. Let us recall to mind the good and holy men of different sects and churches who once were with us and are now in the presence of Christ; and ask whether the points which divided them here, and about which, it may be, they contended and wrangled so hotly,

can keep them asunder there, in that deeper, diviner life into which they have entered. Let us think, too, if it be ours to join one day their blissful society, whether we shall carry with us much of our ecclesiastical partizanships or our theological jealousies into the still, sweet rest of heaven. Travellers as we are midst the mists and shadows of this life, it is not wonderful, perhaps, that in its dim and deceptive light we should sometimes mistake a friend for a foe, or turn away from a brother as if he were a stranger and an alien. But 'the night is far spent, the day is at hand'; not distant is the hour when the sun of our souls shall rise full-orbed on our waiting eyes, and the mists shall disappear and the shadows shall flee away for ever; and then—then at last, if not now, we shall recognize in every soul that has ever loved and lived for Christ, the face of a brother and friend.[1]

¶ How unforgettable are the words of William Penn, when he said, that all merciful, humble, just, and devout souls are everywhere of one religion, and when death hath taken off the mask, they will know and love each other. Happily we no longer have to wait for death to remove the mask that hides man from his fellow soul! Our age has many faults, but it is great in its sense of the unity of mankind, and its vision of the solidarity of faith and hope. As Mark Rutherford said, we are coming to see that 'we are one in the human, the immense orthodoxy which lies beneath our differences,' and this makes for a friendship of faith.[2]

Sympathy in Action.

Ja. i. 27.—'To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction.'

'PURE religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this. To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.' Divorced from its context, we seem to have here the whole duty of man in an epigram. It is not easy because it is short, or simple because it is unmingled with Christian dogma. If it supplied us with certain rules it would be to many persons a more welcome guide. But, while it seems on a hasty glance to dictate rules, it is not really so. God's Word never educates by dictating rules, for rules should, *must*, vary from age to age, from individual to individual, from circumstance to circumstance. God gives us in His teaching not rules but principles, because principles, if vital and in continual touch with the spirit of wisdom from on high, create and enforce the rules as they are wanted. And so here, on the surface of things, James is reducing our whole duty to others to certain specific social charities. He defines and limits the class of the afflicted to the widow and the fatherless. We know he did not mean thus to restrict his command. He had no intention of teaching that, if a good woman has relieved the widows and orphans within her little sphere, her obligations to her fellow-creatures have begun and ended there, and her religion as regards them has been perfectly fulfilled. Yet such would be the case if an injunction like this were to be construed as a rule and not a principle. And this marks the eternal difference between the two things. To interpret a command as a rule is to narrow and restrict it, to kill the diffusive life that resides within it. To interpret it as a principle, on the other hand, is to quicken it, to open one's eyes to its possibilities, and its versatilities, to awaken interest and joy in its application and development. The very fact that James selects a single class of charitable acts in order to commend the grace of charity as supreme proves that he meant his injunction as a principle, a type, a symbol, of that outcome of the heart's sympathies which every relation of family and friendship and social obligation imposes as a duty on the servant of God. The Apostle's command would, if any other interpretation be sanctioned, receive only a perfunctory and literal obedience. If the duty of sympathy could be supposed to be restricted to the command he imposed, how easily and how soon the fulfilment of that command would lose its virtue!

[1] J. Caird, *University Sermons*, i. 9ff.
[2] J. F. Newton, in *The Christian Commonwealth*, Feb. 23, 1916, p. 277.

But James flung it down as an illustration, a symbol, a pathetic and striking instance of the sorrows and needs that are in the world, for which we are, in our degree and opportunity, responsible. He left it impossible for anyone to say that he had ever fulfilled the great injunction, that he had ever done more than touch the hem and fringe of the vast obligation.

Keeping this principle in mind, let us look at the word which the Apostle uses. It is the word 'visit.' The Greek word so translated means 'to seek out,' 'to care for.' In all real charity there must be the element of personal sacrifice. Sometimes we bestow help only out of indolence, scarcely taking trouble to inquire into our brother's need; and there is an unthinking and indiscriminate giving which produces more harm than the evils it purposes to redress. But this word 'visit' shows the genius of Christian philanthropy. For one thing, it means an honest, painstaking judgment; for another thing, it means a fellow-feeling for the distressed; and, above all, it means that, whatever else we give, we should give ourselves. There are times when the pressure of a kind hand and the look of a kind eye are more eloquent than pursefuls of gold. Has not money become far too prominent in our thoughts of charity? Have we not narrowed down that grand word 'benevolence' to the diameter of a piece of silver. We need not indulge in any depreciation of the effect of money wisely given. We need not say that there are higher things to give than money, and that it is the sympathy of the heart which, with or without an outward gift, is the true measure of our charity. It is well that the rich should be reminded that their duty to their brethren is not exhausted by gifts of money, however lavish these may be. It is well the poor should know that their poverty does not shut them out from this privilege. The world owes more than it knows to the Peters and the Johns. Silver and gold they had none, but such as they had they gave unto us. They gave of the wealth that was within, and their touch awakened aspiration, and quickened into life our decaying strength.

Was it not thus that Jesus gave? Literally He 'visited' the distressed, He was perpetually in the presence of the miserable; and wherever He went He gave, with or without other gifts, the deepest, innermost treasure He possessed, until, finally, in the face of a world's affliction, He gave Himself. 'Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.' The way to Christian philanthropy is still the way of surrender. It is the sacrificial spirit that, mingling with our deeds, makes our charity at all worthy of Him 'who, though he was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, that we, through his poverty might become rich.'

¶ This sympathy was the secret of Christ's power when He was here. He was poor, He was homeless, He was despised and rejected of men. But yet He visited the fatherless and the widow in their affliction. It was this sense of what He had been, and could now be no longer, which quenched the light, and took the sweetness from the air, when He lay in the sepulchre. A friend of Tennyson walking with him in his garden said, 'What do you think of Christ?' The poet remained silent awhile, and then he answered, 'Look, here is a flower. What the sun is to this flower, Christ is to me.' Our religion should be light and warmth and life itself to the dark, chill, desolate world around us.

> 'Tis worth a wise man's best of life,
> 'Tis worth a thousand years of strife,
> If thou canst lessen but by one
> The countless ills beneath the sun.[1]

1. So 'visit' means more than merely entering the abode of those who need our help. It means that we must be constantly on the alert to discover them. It means asking ourselves what we can do for them when we do find them? It means bringing them words of love and comfort. It means bringing them a face lit up with sympathy and kindness. It means scattering seeds of kindness on our way. There are many who have gone down into the shadows of the grave with broken hearts who would have been saved if there had been one

[1] T. Harwood Pattison, *The South Wind*, 189.

loving face to smile on them, one warm hand to bid them be of good cheer. It means bringing, perhaps, to the hungry something to eat, to the thirsty something to drink, to the naked something to put on. Remember that the Master will one day say: 'I was . . . naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick and ye visited me.' It means bringing them the greatest of all gifts, 'the wonderful words of eternal life.'

2. Not that James implies that the visitation he commends must involve what is called spiritual or religious advice. It may, or it may not, be thus accompanied. And it is not every visitor who is competent to give this. Circumstances must decide. Some have, however, imagined that a visit of consolation, in order to be really Christian, should be accompanied by some religious remarks. There is a truth and there is a fallacy in this. As we have the mind of Christ we are guided by the requirements of the case. On one occasion, in healing a man, He said: 'Son, thy sins be forgiven thee.' On another, when He raised a damsel to life, 'He commanded that something be given her to eat.' In visiting anyone in his or her affliction we may be moved by the purest Christian spirit, and do what Christ would have done, without any use of scriptural or sacred language.

¶ Says Canon Barnett's wife and biographer: Requests often came for my husband's presence from the dying or those lingeringly ill. I do not mean those terrible demands from the frightened friends of disreputable sinners, who think the parson can give them an insurance pass into Heaven. Every clergyman with a shifting population knows those midnight calls, usually delayed till the poor creature is beyond the reception of conscious comfort. No; the sick visiting which came to Mr. Barnett was that by calls from those who had known him in times of health and well-being. He went every fortnight for more than three years to one fellow-worker, slowly dying of cancer; he wrote over sixty letters to a learned friend; and the Workhouse and Hospital frequently admitted him to visit patients who would be content with no one else. He was specially tender to the old or those who are what is called 'breaking-up,' helping them to face bravely, if not to rejoice in, the coming change.

As he saw each one alone I cannot tell of what happened, but I know that the regulation Scripture reading and expected prayer were often omitted, and that the talk was always led away, even when difficult, from the troubles of the illness, to the sorrows and sins of the suffering world, or to the higher hopes encircling the eternal verities.[1]

3. It must be remembered, too, that the showing of that true Christian sympathy which marks 'pure religion' is not confined to the relief of bodily affliction, or to the assuaging of mental sorrow, such as may be felt by the fatherless and widow in their fresh distress. These represent persons who are lonely, deserted, or in some extremity of need, whether it be of the body or of the mind. With them we are called, as Christians, to be tender, pitiful, and considerate. But there are some who suffer—it may be sorely—without feeling poverty, pain, or bereavement. They may be smarting under social injustice which makes them bitter against their fellows. Here the Christian who apprehends what James is inspired to teach us is not content with speaking kindly and compassionate words, but will put himself to trouble, and do his best to see that such as are in this need and necessity have right.

¶ Sympathy is not feeling *for* another, it is much more than that—it is feeling *with* another. We do not therefore confine the thought of the text to the widow and the fatherless in their affliction. The root of the trouble which separates nation from nation, class from class, is lack of sympathy. The rich are heartless because they do not know what it is to be poor. The strong are pitiless because they do not know what it is to be weak. How little I know of the dreadful force of circumstances which landed this man in the jail; drove that poor drifting wreck, once a sweet, pure child, to shame; and buried that

[1] *Canon Barnett*, i. 270.

boy of promise in a drunkard's grave. There is deep truth in the inscription in the Jewish graveyard over some flagrant sinner—'Thou knowest.' Yes, God knows. Let us try to know also.[1]

¶ Such visiting of the fatherless and widows is the mark of true greatness. Lord Rosebery ends his estimate of Frederick the Great in this way: 'What is greatness? What is glory? These are the questions which arise on a contemplation of Frederick's life. He indeed had his full measure of glory and is usually designated as "Great." But his death was preceded by scores of thousands of others for which he was solely responsible; a gloomy and sorrowful procession of plain folk slaughtered because "ambition, interest, the desire to make people talk about me" had let him seize without provocation or justification a province from a young woman unable at the moment to defend it. These souls surely await him at the gates of the future.

And at this time Howard, in obscurity, was lightening prison, and succouring hopeless prisoners. Jenner was ridding mankind of the loathsome scourge of smallpox. An obscure group of pious enthusiasts were striving to free the world from the curse of slavery. Wesley was bringing a new joy of hope and faith into the dark places of his country. No one called these men great and glorious for their poor achievements; they were merely preserving and solacing humanity, while the great and glorious were earning laurels by destroying it.

But history, when it is written in just proportion and with regard to the eternal truths which ultimately govern the world, may distribute its honours in a different spirit. Then these humble benefactors may rank higher than the wanton conqueror who, possessing consummate qualities of brain and fortitude, was a curse to his age and to his kind.[2]

[1] T. H. Pattison, *The South Wind*, 189.
[2] Lord Rosebery, *Miscellanies*, i. 128.

Our Attitude to the World.

Ja. i. 27.—'Unspotted from the world.'

1. The problem of the relation between religion and the world is older than Christianity; and it is one of those problems which Christianity has met, not with a concise and portable solution, but with rays of light enough for a consistent life, though not for a coherent theory.

When we try to disentangle our way from the world's ways, we may not find it a simple and straightforward task. Conscience and experience may speak to us as emphatically as the Bible about worldliness, and what comes of it: we may know well how true it is that no man can serve two masters, and how the love and service of the world drain life and reality out of the love and service men may still profess towards God: we may know the inner poverty, the weakness, the deterioration, the blank and pitiful failure of insight that sets in when a man allows himself worldly ambition, worldly pride—all this may be clear and certain to us, and the sternest language of the New Testament may be matched in the plainest experience of our own life: nevertheless we may sincerely find it hard to see distinctly what the world is, and where its ways diverge from those that a Christian man should hold. For it is a complex and mysterious scene that is before us. Human life, human society, has not come to be what it is without the care of God for it. It has its own laws, and their original is in His will. It may be all astir with human selfishness and folly, but it is astir also with Divine love and wisdom; and the great patience of the Almighty, from whom no secrets are hid, moves about its tangled ways. Through a costly and unfathomable past it has came to be what it now is. The elements that have entered into that past, and into the present that has come of it, have differed as widely as light and darkness; their interaction, their conflicts, their form, have gone on for centuries by the permission and under the providence of God:—it would be strange if the

product of all this admitted of easy unravelling, of obvious division, of confident and simple labelling.

2. But if men take pains about two things they are not likely to go far wrong. The first is to try patiently and reverently to understand, so far as they can, the life, the troubles, the aspirations, the forces of the age in which they live. The second is to maintain steadily their own communication with God, their realization of His presence, their attention to the disclosures of His will, their expectation of His judgment.

(1) It takes thought and time and study and self-discipline to understand one's own day at all: but such understanding is necessary to the discernment and doing of one's work, to resisting or advancing rightly. We may have, perhaps, at times to resist uncompromisingly: only let it not be unappreciatively. For the wisdom or unwisdom of our policy may count for less in the long run than the justice and charity with which we chose and held it. It is the carelessness of antagonism, not its resoluteness, that provokes men to resentment and vehemence and unintelligent zeal. Whatever bearing may become a Christian man in the presence of this strange scene of human life, with its bewildering confusion, with its superficial unreality, with the awful reality that religion sees in it, it cannot be the bearing of indifference or disdain or remoteness: it cannot be the renunciation of interest, responsibility and hope.

¶ I recall a description of a province close to our own shores which may illustrate the attitude that no man has a right to hold towards the life of his own day.

Many of us may have felt the extraordinary gap or contrast which severs Brittany from the general characteristic life of France. We may have delighted in the unbroken customs, the strange forms of prejudice, of thought, of piety which hold their own in villages where it is hard to recollect that Paris is but a short railway journey from us. But what has been the bearing of Brittany towards the great nation of which it forms a part?

'Brittany,' Dean Church wrote in 1846, 'is really not France, any more than the outlandish names on its map are French. Brittany hangs on to France, because it cannot well do otherwise; but like a mass of extraneous matter which will not assimilate, dead and heavy and unsympathising. As a part of France she is not doing her work. A national character that ought to tell on the whole country, resolute, steady, serious, and though slow, apprehensive,—full of quiet deep fortitude—seems thrown away. The field of European civilisation is not, of course, the only or the highest field for these qualities; but if the advance of human society is to be considered as a providential dispensation, it is one field: and they are missed, they have not found their place, when they are not there. Brittany is like a nation which has failed in its object, and been beaten. While her neighbours are in the hey-day of success, hopeful and busy, she keeps apart, contented with her own isolation . . . ; and looks on with melancholy listlessness at the stirring of the world.'

(2) But with all the pains we take to understand the character and life of our own day, let us never weary in watchfulness and prayer that the communion of our souls with God may mean to us more and more as the years go by. We have not done with the temptations of worldliness when we have seen through or got tired of its commoner attractions—when we have learnt that life is too serious a business for us to be hunting after praise or popularity or social distinction in it. There are deeper ways of worldliness than those. But surely in all things the abiding secret of unworldliness is the power of prayer. For it is through prayer that we maintain and strengthen and realize our hold upon the everlasting judgments of the Almighty; through prayer we receive the light that from many sources is replenished in the soul that is opened God-wards, that ever seeks His face. In that light the world is truly seen. All in it that is false and hollow, tainted and tainting, iniquitous, degrading, heartless, treacherous, loses its glamour and subtlety for those who walk in that light, whose hearts are full

of it; they deal with sophistries as simply as the little child in Hans Andersen's story of 'The Emperor's New Suit' dealt with the fiction that all the court was keeping up. To their 'innocence of eye' things count for what they are.

Yes, and for them the hidden elements of good start into sight out of the confusion of the world. The light that is in them wakes up, as it were, and attracts and receives the reflected light on earth. God, whom they ever seek and love, makes them of quick understanding to discover and delight in all that is of Him. For them the desert shall rejoice and blossom as a rose, and going through the vale of misery they shall use it for a well. There is no scene, no field of work, that has not its surprises of radiance for those who bear about with them that interpreting light of the knowledge and the love of God, the light that is won through the hidden work of prayer. Whatever else we do or leave undone, let us not give up that work or suffer our hearts to falter or grow slack in it; for it is there that we must gain the light and strength that will enable us to understand this wonderful, pathetic, restless age; the light and strength which often give God's servants an unselfish sort of worldly wisdom with all their sheer unworldliness; the light and strength we need to serve our generation by the will of God, yet keep ourselves 'unspotted from the world.'[1]

He walked by faith and not by sight,
  By love and not by law;
The presence of the wrong or right
  He rather felt than saw.

And, pausing not for doubtful choice
  Of evils great or small,
He listened to that inward voice
  Which called away from all.

O Spirit of that early day,
  So pure and strong and true,
Be with us in the narrow way
  Our faithful fathers knew.

Give strength the evil to forsake,
  The cross of truth to bear,
And love and reverent fear to make
  Our daily lives a prayer.

[1] F. Paget, in *The Cambridge Review*, xvii. Supp. No. 415ff.

Spotlessness.

Ja. i. 27.—'To keep himself unspotted from the world.'

In a splendid hall in the British Museum there are shown what are called the Elgin Marbles. These marbles were taken from the ruins of the Parthenon at Athens, the most perfect building that man has ever made. They are statues and figures carved by the greatest sculptors that ever lived; and for more than two thousand years they have been the admiration of the whole world. At first sight, one would not perhaps think much of them, for they are all more or less broken fragments, injured by the ravages of time and the destructiveness of man. And yet the student of art who knows about these things sees in them the most wonderful beauty, and is lost in astonishment at the genius of the men who wrought them.

These precious sculptures are kept with the greatest care, and every precaution is taken to prevent accident or injury to them. Night and day, we are told, the air of the hall is so warmed that it is made perfectly dry—and no damp can by any possibility settle in it. Where the carvings are very fine and delicate, a plate of glass is put over them to protect them; and the larger exposed ones are gently cleaned every morning by a pair of bellows which blow away any fleck and shred of waste, and every particle of dust that falls upon them. Every second or third year they are gone over inch by inch with a fine sponge dipped in lukewarm water, and then wiped dry with another sponge. The utmost care is taken in this washing, and only a thoroughly skilled man is employed, who takes several days to the work and does only a

small portion at a time. It has been said that no crown jewels in the world are treated and watched with so much care and anxiety. And in consequence of this the marbles are perfectly preserved amid the dust and smoke of London.

Now these sculptures are taken such extraordinary care of because they are among the most precious things in the world. No money could buy them; no skill could replace them if they were destroyed. They are proofs of the wonderful power that God has given to man; and they have come down to us, with all the great memories and associations of the immortal past, to instruct and delight the people of this age; and we as a nation who have the custody of them are bound to hand them down uninjured to the generations that are to follow.

When we gaze at these sculptures, and hear how highly they are prized, and how carefully they are preserved, does not the thought arise irresistibly in the mind: If the form of man carved in marble be treated in such a way as to prevent the slightest chance of injury to it, how should the soul of man be guarded against the stains and pollutions of the world? We are the workmanship of the Divine Sculptor. He created us in His own image. We came from His master-hand perfect; and though sin has broken and defaced our nature, we still retain enough of the likeness of God to make us great and beautiful in our very ruin. We are placed in a world full of defilements. The smuts of sin fall so thick that no one can go through the world and escape them altogether. How many fair and innocent children have grown up with the world's spots thick upon them, having lost that purity of heart, that guilelessness of character, which is more precious than all that the world can give in exchange. But God for our highest good has placed us in these circumstances of trial. He does not want us to be protected from the evils of the world, like a tender exotic plant under the glass roof of a hot-house. He does not wish us to be taken from the dangers to which we are liable, and placed like the Elgin Marbles in the guarded rooms of a museum. He wants us to be exposed to the dust and smoke of the world, and to encounter all kinds of weather in it, that we may exercise care and diligence in keeping ourselves pure, and may grow strong and vigorous in our souls by resisting and overcoming the pollutions of the world.'[1]

1. Let us look at some of the spots that defile the soul.

(1) There are spots like those which mud makes upon one's clothes when it is splashed up from the street, and these spots can be removed without leaving any trace behind, if they are rubbed off as soon as they are dry.

¶ I was hurrying across Fulton Street the other day, on my way to an appointment in the country. It was just after a rain, and as I started across, a wagon came lumbering by, and spattered me with mud from head to foot. Imagine my feelings! Dare I go out to Orange to make an address, as was my purpose, before a thousand people, thus spattered all over with mud? Those who saw me in that plight might have thought that I was cleanly enough in my habits, but certainly I was spattered, and they would think more of the spattering, doubtless, than of what I was saying. I was therefore compelled to take the time, hurried as I was, to remove the spattered mud from my clothing. And so, good as you may be in your heart, pure as your religion is, if you put yourself in certain relations, the muddy wheels of the world will spatter you all over.[2]

(2) But there are other spots, that harden and become ingrained in the soul, that dye the character so deeply that the dye enters into its very substance, and no tears or pains can wash them out. The tendency of every sin is to become of this fast and destructive nature.

¶ We have seen at some time or other a newly gathered bunch of grapes. We have noticed what a beautiful bloom there was on each berry; how delicate and soft it was, how it set off the rich glowing hue of the grapes

[1] H. Macmillan, *The Daisies of Nazareth*, 218f.
[2] A. C. Dixon, *Milk and Meat*, 204.

by the contrast of its grey colour. We have touched this bloom very lightly and it vanished, and the appearance of the berry was quite spoiled. Had that berry been growing on the vine when we touched it and thus rubbed off the bloom, which serves an important purpose in the economy of the fruit, regulating its temperature, the berry would not be able to resist the forces opposed to its welfare, and it would soon decay, and in the place of the beautiful bloom would come the grey unsightly mould of a destructive fungus. And so our soul has tender grapes, and a very little thing may hurt and injure us irretrievably. An evil look, a hasty word, a trifling action may rub off the bloom of our beauty and impair the delicate sensitiveness of our nature, and prevent us henceforward from being what we might have been. Our first love may be thus spoiled and chilled, and instead of growing in grace and in likeness to Jesus, we may wither and decline, and bring forth no fruit profitable to God or man. How necessary, then, it is that we should take the utmost care to keep ourselves unspotted from the world; so that, avoiding the least appearance of evil, we may grow up and go through the world with the fresh fair bloom of our childhood upon us.[1]

(3) Some spots are invisible to ourselves. They take on the pattern and the colour of the world in which we live. They are in harmony with the background of our surroundings. That is to say, we insensibly copy the weaknesses and faults of those whom we love and esteem; and thus our spots disguise themselves from us so that we do not know them to be spots at all. We need then to have these secret unknown faults revealed to us in another light than that in which we live; we need to have the contrast of other surroundings. Jesus gives us the revelation of heaven; and the purities of the sphere in which He dwells will not only show us the impurities of our own sphere, but will help to make us different from our circumstances.

¶ The water lily grows out of the blackest mud at the bottom of the loch, but it produces the purest white blossom on the surface of the water; and what is the secret of its purity? It is the pure sun that helps it, that gives it vital force to convert even impurity into stainless whiteness. The water-beetle goes down to the bottom of the muddy pond, and keeps itself pure, because it takes down with it a bubble of air which shuts it in and keeps out the defiling waters. And so it is the sunshine and the air of heaven alone that can enable us to keep ourselves unspotted from the world.

2. But the best of all ways, with Christ's gracious help, to keep ourselves pure is to be active in good works. The river Arve and the river Rhone unite at Geneva. The Arve is very muddy and slow; the Rhone is swift and clear. When the two rivers unite, the swift Rhone by the force of its swiftness keeps its dirty companion from mingling its polluting waters with it for a long distance. The mighty river Amazon in South America keeps back the salt waters of the ocean for more than a hundred miles from its mouth by the tremendous force of its current. And it is in the same way that we can resist the pollutions of the world by being actively engaged in our Heavenly Father's business, by seeking to do all the good we can. The true spotlessness will be ours not when we guard ourselves carefully against every temptation, afraid to do this and that lest it should be wrong, gathering our garments close about us lest they should in any way come into contact with the world's impurity, but when we are girding ourselves for active work for Christ, and not thinking of ourselves at all, or of anything but our duty.[1]

[1] H. Macmillan, *Daisies of Nazareth*, 223.

[1] H. Macmillan, *Daisies of Nazareth*, 228.

Respect of Persons.

Ja. ii. 1.—'My brethren, have not (RV 'hold not') the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons.'

In August, 1880, Mr. Gladstone, then Prime Minister, being somewhat out of health, came down to Holmbury to recover, and on one

Saturday during his stay a Cabinet Council was held there, at which the Duke of Argyll: Lord Granville, Foreign Secretary; John Bright and several other members of the Government were present.

Early on Sunday morning, August 15th, I received a note from Mr. Leveson-Gower asking me to reserve two pews for his guests. Now our church was a free and open one, and so strongly did Mr. Street, its founder, feel with regard to this matter that he had placed a marble tablet in the ante-chapel with the following text engraved upon it:

'If there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment; and ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool: Are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts?' (Jas. ii. 2, 3, 4).

This being the case, I referred the matter to my church-wardens, Mr. Street and Mr. Frank Walton, R.I., the well-known landscape painter. They consulted together, and, feeling that a principle was involved, courteously replied to Mr. Leveson-Gower that no seats could be reserved, but that they would undertake to find sufficient room for his guests if they arrived in good time before the service. And so it happened that, on that and many other occasions, peer and peasant were seated side by side in the church.[1]

'Respect of persons' is a phrase which we all understand. We use it to represent any bias of the opinion, the judgment, or the attitude, to the prejudice of right and equity, from a regard to the mere outward circumstances of individuals; any unfair slighting or disparagement of some, and undue courting or preference of others, on account of what they have or have not, irrespective of what they are. But, as Archbishop Trench points out in his *Select Glossary of English Words*, 'We have forfeited the full force of the phrase, from the fact that "person" does not mean for us now, all that it once meant. From *persona*, the mask constantly worn by the actors of antiquity, it once signified, by natural transfer, the part or rôle in the play which each sustains; as when an old English author writes, "Certain it is that no one can long put on a *person* and act a part"; or as when Milton writes, "If it be at all an honour to the *person* which he bore."' 'In the great tragi-comedy of life,' comments the Archbishop, 'each sustains a *person*—one that of a king, another that of a hind; one must play Lazarus, another Dives; and this is the *person* which God—for whom the question is not, what person we are bearing, but how we are bearing it—does not respect.' So, to respect persons is to allow our valuation and our treatment of men to be determined by the part allotted them, without reference to the way in which they fill it, or to that which they are in themselves; esteeming them according to their place and their possessions, rather than according to the spirit which they breathe in their place, whether it be high or low, and the life they live with their possessions, whether these be large or small.

James proceeds to explain his dehortation with a hypothetical example. He supposes his readers to be convened in religious assembly, or in some assembly, where two strangers enter, the one, a man with gold rings and fine clothing, the other, a poor man in vile raiment. Fastening upon the signs of wealth in the former, they at once invite him to a good seat, while the latter they direct to stand behind, or they point him indifferently to some mean place. 'Here,' says the Apostle, 'is an illustration of what I mean.' And what he would blame here was, not that two men of different social rank, and coming from different personal and domestic surroundings, should be found differently placed in public—the one higher up than the other—but the disposition, the readiness shown, to pay honour and to offer indignity purely upon the ground of the individual's circumstances, in ignorance or in heedlessness of what his intrinsic quality might be.

[1] J. Shearme, *Lively Recollections*, 165.

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¶ There is a story, which I believe originates with Nasreddin Hoja, the great Turkish jester of Konia (Iconium), but which in Arabic-speaking countries is always clothed in Arabic dress and is told of Jiha, who is the equivalent jester of Arabic lore. This is the story as I had it from a fellaha. A man on his travels, and somewhat poorly dressed, came to the house of the Shech of a village. The servants about the doors admitted him no further than the *matra el wootye* (the place of shoes—the corner just inside the door where the guests leave their shoes before stepping on to the carpet). When the supper was served, the visitors ate first, then the household, and then those of the place of shoes. The visitor went away, and came back next day dressed in a *sighye* (a white kumbaz, the long robe which is the indoor dress), with a white shirt, and a fine large turban. On arrival he was greeted with the usual *Ahlan wa sahlan* (welcome and blessing) and at once conducted to the *sior el bait* (the heart of the house), for no one recognised the dusty traveller of the night before. When the food was brought he offered it first to his fine wide sleeve, and when the coffee came he drank it through the corner of his *sighye*. When the people asked him the meaning of this, he said that he 'offered what was best to those who had the most influence. My white kumbaz and my white shirt are not put into the place of shoes,' he said. 'If there were any more honour in making my turban large, I would make it as large as a camel-load.'[1]

1. Now there may be considerable variations of behaviour to people of different circumstances, in which we are not at all to be charged with respecting persons. While equally courteous to all, according to their several conditions or their several relations with ourselves, we cannot possibly salute, entertain, or conduct our intercourse with all in the same manner. Altogether apart from the question of character, of worth, things are often involved in connection with rank and riches on the one hand, and with poverty and low station on the other, which must needs occasion, as they demand also, difference of behaviour; 'and to exhibit,' as one writes, 'an uniformity of carriage to all, with no distinction, would argue a want of penetration or a want of sensibility. But the vice to be deprecated, and which under more than a single form may be encountered among us, is the vice of sacrificing or subordinating, in our social regards, regard for the moral to regard for the material—of allowing the *person* of men, in the ancient sense of the word, to influence unduly our feelings and our attitudes towards them—to make us indifferent or unjust to the men themselves, ready to condone their badness, or to ignore their goodness.

¶ Little children have no respect of persons. They can be trained into snobs, but they are born democrats to begin with. And men of genius have sometimes shown themselves to be as little children in this happy instinct. It was said of Sir Walter Scott: 'He speaks to every man as if they were blood relations.' No wonder Dean Stanley declared: 'I am of the religion of Walter Scott.'[1]

¶ In his biographical study of Bishop Fraser Lord Bryce says he lost no opportunity of meeting the working men, would go and talk to them in the yards of the mills or at the evening gatherings of mechanics' institutes; and when any misfortune befell, such as a colliery accident, he was often among the first who reached the spot to help the survivors and comfort the widows. He made no difference between rich and poor, showed no wish to be a guest in the houses of the great, and treated the poorest curate with as much courtesy as the most pompous county magnate.[2]

2. There is the worship which many are always prepared to offer to success, without caring to ask how it has been won. If a man has but succeeded they rush to crown him, heedless altogether of what he may be the while, or of the means by which the consum-

[1] A. Goodrich-Freer, *Arabs in Tent and Town*, 145.

[1] T. H. Barlow, *The Upward Calling*, 54.

[2] J. Bryce, *Studies in Contemporary Biography*, 203.

mation has been reached; ready, at all events, to accept it presently as a full atonement for all that they may have perceived and felt to be ugly in his career, and which, had he miserably failed, would have provoked infallibly their utter condemnation and scorn. Have we not heard it declared concerning some reckless or unprincipled proceeding, that 'nothing could have justified such a proceeding but success,' as though to succeed carried with it, in the esteem of the speaker, the absolution of all trespasses, and in failure only lay disgrace and shame? And how apt we are to suspect the latter—to look down upon it with disdain, to shrink away from it and pass it by on the other side, with no disposition to inquire what beauty of faithful effort or noble integrity it may hide. 'How much more pleasant,' writes one, 'do the qualities and actions even of a friend appear, when his path is marked with success, than when it is attended with disappointment, and how much more favourably do we think of ourselves in prosperity than in adversity.' Yes, there is a tendency with us all to smile upon success.

¶ As he advanced in life some of his friends felt that Nicoll became more conservative in tastes and ideas—as so often happens with age. It was a more serious flaw that, as he succeeded, he grew too fond of successful men. His elder daughter admits, 'I think we were brought up to consider unsuccessful people as not much worth knowing.'[1]

That Beautiful Name.

Ja. ii. 7.—'That worthy name by the which ye are called.'

The word in this passage rendered in the Authorized Version 'worthy' is the Greek word generally rendered 'beautiful.' There is no reason why it should not be so rendered here. Let us so take it for our present use.

There can be no question as to what name the Apostle thus refers. 'The name' was a common expression among the early Christians. They did everything, suffered everything, sacrificed everything for the sake of 'the name.' What name? There was no need to specify. For them there was but one name, the 'name above every name.'

When James speaks of 'the beautiful name' he is not, of course, referring merely to the music of the word. There have been names full of music, but that music has found no corresponding harmony in the lives of their owners. Names that tremble on the ear like echoes of far-off mellow chimes stand in history as the labels of some of the meanest and most hateful of mankind. Mary!—where is a more euphonious name? And yet one bore it who is known to history as 'Bloody Mary.'

But names that are quaint and uncouth in themselves yet acquire a charm from the characters they designate.

> What's in a name? The rose
> By any other name would smell as sweet.

Yes. The rose would smell as sweet without the name, but the name would not be as sweet without the rose. The very word is full of poetry to us because it is charged with countless delightful memories. We think of its place in history as the badge of courtly houses. We dream of its home in the gardens of Persia where the nightingale trills her lay amid the royal blooms. We breathe again the summer air laden with its perfume. We recall the old tangled garden where, in our childhood, we wandered and played, full of childhood's poetry and as yet unshattered dreams.

¶ Travelling in Wales, I once saw at a station a name that looked like a mere heterogeneous jumble of all the most awkward consonants in the language, as if you had taken the letters of the alphabet, minus the vowels, and shaken them out of a sack! It was a Sabbath-day's journey from one end of that name to the other. Yet, uncouth and unpronounceable as it seemed to me, on the ear of many a Welshman, I doubt not, those harsh gutturals would fall like a strain of sweetest music, because it was the name of the beautiful valley wherein he was born, with all its picturesqueness and poetry, and all the dear

[1] T. H. Darlow, *William Robertson Nicoll*, 420.

associations of home. In that name he hears again the tinkle of the sheepbell, the murmur of the mountain stream, the pastoral note of the shepherd. It comes back to him redolent of the cowslip, and the wild rose, it recalls to him the playmates of his childhood, the companions of his youth, and is melodious with echoes of the voice of the maiden whom he loved; and when exiled far, far away that name sings in his ear like a lullaby, and he murmurs it in death.[1]

1. The 'beautiful name,' then, what does it stand for? What did it stand for to the writer of this Epistle? Man of austere piety though he was, there is a wonderful tenderness and pathos in his introduction of the phrase. It seems to come charged with blessed reminiscences. And no wonder, if, as was perhaps the case, the writer of this Epistle was James, the Lord's brother, who had grown up amid that little family circle at Nazareth with that pure, wonderful Boy. 'Jesus!'—they had lisped that name when they were children together. 'Jesus!'—they had often uttered it as they plucked the wild spring flowers together in the Galilean fields, or as they played with each other by the fountain or in the market-place. 'Jesus!'—they had often in their childish sorrows called upon that name and told their little troubles into His ear. And though, as they grew older, a shadow fell upon their intercourse because 'His brethren believed not on Him,' yet the very memory of that shadow, when they did believe, would deepen the pathos of the recollection, and the name would be none the less beautiful because for a season the cloud of misunderstanding had rested upon it. To James it had been a name of ever-deepening, ever more hallowed significance—the name of Brother, Companion, Teacher, Master. 'Jesus!'—Can we wonder that the Apostle's anger flashed hot and fierce against any who blasphemed 'that beautiful name'?

2. And what is the power of that name to-day—its power to charm, to fascinate, to attract, to inspire? There are other names, indeed, that are mighty to conjure with. The cunning orator can always bring an audience to its feet by the utterance of the name of its idol for the hour. There are names that act like a magic spell in war, in literature, in politics, in art. But where is the name that touches men as this name touches them? What other name is there that is not only a name, a memory, but a living power, so that of multitudes it may be said, 'His name, through faith in his name, hath made this man strong'? To many the names of Homer and Shakespeare, of Alexander and Cæsar, of Plato and Aristotle, of Michael Angelo, and Raphael, of Dante and Milton, of Gustavus Adolphus and Cromwell, of Bacon and Carlyle, have been mighty incentives, inspiring memories, but 'there is none other name under heaven given among men' which produces the same rapture of enthusiasm as the 'beautiful name.' There is none other name to proclaim which men will renounce all the comforts of civilization and go at all risks into the deadliest climates and the most inhospitable wilds.

'Jesus!' name of wondrous love;
Name all other names above,
Unto which must every knee
Bow in deep humility.

'Jesus!' name of priceless worth,
To the fallen sons of earth,
For the promise that it gave,—
'Jesus shall His people save.'

'Jesus!' only name that's given
Under all the mighty heaven
Whereby man, to sin enslaved,
Bursts his fetters, and is saved.[1]

[1] J. Halsey.

The Royal Law.

Ja. ii. 8.—'If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well.'

What James calls the 'royal law' is mentioned for the first time by Moses. It was taken up

[1] W. W. How.

and re-affirmed by Christ, who set it under that other old command. 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.' These two royal laws were inculcated as the foundation of moral obligation and the sum of religious duty. On them 'hang all the law and the prophets.'

1. The word 'neighbour' in this royal law had, through the lapse of ages, acquired a narrow meaning, plainly because men's thoughts and sympathies were less comprehensive than the Divine purpose. But Christ gave new applications to it, and a more expansive spiritual interpretation.

The neighbour with Him was no longer confined to the same tribe, or to the dwellers in the same valley or nation, but became coextensive with human suffering and misfortune throughout the vast family of mankind. By that one law, which declares that God has made of one blood all the nations of the earth, the physical unity of the race is implied; so by the operation of this one law of love, the moral unity and solidarity of humanity is intended.

¶ The ancient world knew not Love. It knew passion for woman, affection for a friend, justice for a fellow-countryman, hospitality for the stranger; but with Love it was unacquainted. Zeus protects pilgrims and strangers; no one who knocks at the door of a Greek will be refused meat, a cup of wine and a couch. The poor will be housed, the sick cared for, those who mourn consoled with appropriate, sounding words. But the ancients will never understand Love—love that suffers all things and accepts any sacrifice, love for all who suffer and stand alone, love for the humble, the poor, the outcast, the downtrodden and the derelict; love for all, which makes no distinction between the fellow-countryman and the stranger, between the pleasing and the repulsive, between the criminal and the philosopher, the brother and the foe.

Before Jesus no one spoke of this love; not one among all those who discoursed of love. Until the *Sermon on the Mount* was preached love such as this was still unknown.

This is the greatness and newness of Jesus. His greatness eternally new, new to us still, since we have not heard it nor endeavoured to imitate it, and obeyed it as yet. But it will always remain Eternal as Truth.[1]

2. It is when we have to love the neighbour who does not love us that the difficulty appears. Men ask, 'Am I to love a man who does not love me, nay, who may be utterly indifferent to me or even hate me? That is certainly putting the case sharply. The answer is sometimes given after this manner. We object to being forced upon this dilemma. We are disposed to assume neutral ground, and declare our position to be one of indifference. We don't, they say, hate, and would certainly not injure, the man who thinks and speaks unkindly of us; but we do not love him, it is true; we are simply indifferent to him, and care nothing for him.

But to a man who accepts the teaching of Christ we must affirm His Divine testimony. 'But I say unto you,' said our Lord, 'love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.' This interpretation of the royal law by the Master Himself settles at once, for those who acknowledge His authority, the degree and manner in which we are to love our neighbours, whether friends or enemies. Our love to our neighbour is to exhibit the same qualities, sincerity, constancy, activity as the love which we cherish for ourselves.

[1] Giovanni Papini, *The Story of Christ*, 110.

3. What is it in our neighbour we have to love as ourselves? This suggests another question—What is it in *thyself* that thou hast to love? In what sense and to what extent is a man to love himself? Until we understand this point no answer can be given with any clearness and force to the question, How much must I love my neighbour? What is it for a man to love himself? Many persons love to pamper themselves, to indulge themselves, to amuse themselves; but these are as far from loving themselves truly as the night is from the day. For a man to love himself as the Scriptures teach means that he loves the best that is in him. It is to love the highest good of which his nature is capable; it is to love himself in the totality of his well-being. He must be true to the highest aspirations and affections of his moral nature.

We are not required by this royal law to love the sinful, the offensive or the evil characteristics and dispositions in our neighbour, any more than we are required to love these things in ourselves. If my neighbour be an evil-living man, who is not subject to the law of Christ; or if he be a proud overbearing man, caring only to further his own selfish interests, regardless how he may wound the feelings of others, and cause them to suffer wrong—if my neighbour be such a man, I cannot, and I ought not, it would be against the royal law, to love these things in him, just as it would be wrong to love them in myself. But I am to love my neighbour in regard to things affecting his moral and spiritual well-being, and concerning his character and destiny for eternity; I am to help my neighbour to attain these higher, and holier, and better ends of his being, as certainly as I desire to help myself in the acquisition of these aims.

¶ It seems to me, however, that if we could separate resentment against the wrong from resentment against the wrong-doer, as God, we believe, does, and if we had within our hearts the pure love of humanity which was in Christ, we would be able gradually to cleanse our hearts of bitterness and to increase in those positive feelings of compassion and friendliness which our Lord Jesus Christ manifested toward those who were His enemies. His enemies may be very loathsome in our sight, but did not He, in a true sense of the word, 'love' them? The persistence of a parent's love for an unworthy and ungrateful child is one of the wonders of the universe—not the weak indulgence which often accompanies such love, but the love itself, and its persistence. Such love is not contemptible. It is a reflection of the divine Love. God Himself cannot treat the disobedient and rebellious as He treats those who love and serve Him; perhaps He cannot cherish the same feelings toward both; but He loves the sinful still. 'Love in God,' wrote the late Professor W. N. Clarke, 'does not necessarily imply approval. . . . Of course, the perfection of love, regarded as a mutual and equal fellowship, does imply approval, and there are many manifestations of love that must await that perfect relation in which each is satisfied with the other. But to limit love to the affection that accompanies approval is to forget what we know of love among men, and to contradict the revelation that comes in Christ. . . . As to God, it is enough to remember that "God commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." If love in Him implied approval, a sinful world would never have heard that God is love.' If, then, love is the true ideal for man, as it is the glory of God, and love of enemies is an element in man's perfection, it is our Christian duty and privilege to aim at this perfection and to strive toward it.[1]

4. Observe the wisdom and beauty of this saying, and how it is employed as a guide to a higher moral life. Self-love is ever the cause of most of the excuses and sins of our life. Christ takes hold of this very self-love and makes it the occasion and means of rising into juster love of others. He appeals to the solicitude that we have regarding our own health, business reputation, and the desire to avoid self-injury, to cherish similar feelings towards others. The same motives that influ-

[1] J. Muir, *War and Christian Duty*, 119.

ence us in these things with respect to ourselves are to operate on behalf of our neighbour.

If we are eagerly solicitous for our own spiritual welfare—our growth in peace, holiness, and righteousness of living, this, then, is to be the guide as to the manner and extent of our love for the spiritual good of our fellow-men. Love them in these ways as thou lovest thyself.

If this royal law were carefully and universally acted out by all who profess and call themselves Christians, the blessedness of the new heavens and the new earth would be around us. Many of the dreary wastes and desolate places in life would be glad with new joy, and the thoughts of many hearts would become kind, sweet, and beautiful.

¶ Love of self is the root of all misfortune, of all massacres, of all the world's miseries. If the old Adam is to be overcome, love of self must be cast out, and that love which is most contrary to man's actual nature must take its place. The total transformation of man is such a sublime absurdity that it may be achieved only by means that are absurd. It is an extraordinary, an unnatural and insane undertaking, that can be brought to accomplishment only by means that are insane, unnatural and extraordinary—insanity only against nature, its laws and its order.

Up to the present man has loved himself alone, he has returned hatred for hatred; the future man, who shall inhabit the Kingdom, must hate himself and love his enemy. To love one's neighbour as oneself is but an inadequate formula, a mere concession to universal egotism. For he who loves himself cannot love others with a perfect love, and finds himself, of necessity, opposed to others. The one solution of the problem is to hate oneself. We are all overfond of self, we admire and flatter ourselves too much. In order to overcome this blind love we must bring ourselves to see our own baseness, our nothingness and iniquity. Self-contempt is humility, and consequently the beginning of repentance and ultimate perfection. Only the humble will enter the Kingdom of Heaven, because they alone realize how great is the distance that separates them therefrom. We are roused to resentment against others because we believe that they seek to injure our precious *ego*, that they do not sufficiently respect us; let us slay our brother because we believe he obstructs *our* path; let us steal to promote *our own* well-being; let us commit sins of the flesh for the pleasure of *our* bodies. Envy, the mother of rivalry, of strife, and of war, is but the pain we experience because another possesses more than we do, possesses what we do not. Pride is the manifestation of our conviction that we are something more than others, that we are richer, know more, and are of greater importance. All these things that religions, morality and the laws call sin, vice and crime are the outcome of this love of self, of this hatred of others which is born of one unrighteous sentiment, one absorbing and selfish love.[1]

Say not 'I love the Lord,' unless you find
  Within you, welling up by day and night,
A love, strong, full and deep, for human
  kind—
  Unless you find it always a delight
To show the weary one a resting-place—
  To show the doubting one faith's shining
    way—
To show the erring one the Door of Grace—
  To show the sorrowing ones where they
    may lay
Their broken hearts—the heaviness—the
    care—
The grief, the agony, too sharp to bear.

When each man is the neighbour whom we
    love,
  According to the gracious measure of His
    word,
Then may we lift our eyes to heaven above,
  And say with rapture sweet, 'I love the
    Lord.'

[1] Giovanni Papini, *The Story of Christ*, 116.

The Royal Law in Action.

Ja. ii. 8, 9.—'If ye fulfil the royal law, according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well: but if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, being convicted by the law as transgressors.'

St. James is talking of that state of things which is described in the Acts of the Apostles in the first Church in Jerusalem, when it said that no one of them that is of the brethren should have need, because if any man had lands or houses, and sold them, and brought the price and laid it at the Apostles' feet, distribution would be made to each man as he had need. This method of voluntary communism as an economic measure does not appear to have been successful, because it reduced the Church in Jerusalem to great poverty, and in that extreme sense it was not followed, but it was followed in a sense which brought about for many centuries exactly what St. James describes. We find in the early writings vivid maxims which show how it came about. It was forced, in a way, upon the Church, because the Christians were so deeply in suspicion in the society of the Roman Empire that they were boycotted, as is vividly described in the Apocalypse. And, in a measure, they boycotted themselves, because all the industries of the Empire were very closely bound up with idolatries. Each trade was consecrated to some different god, and the meetings of the trade were mixed up with idolatry in a way that the very puritan spirit of the Christians would not tolerate. So that, as a matter of fact, they found themselves a society bound to reconstruct a social system among themselves, and they constructed it on that simple Christian principle, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

Thus it came about that the Early Church did, in fact, for some three centuries, exhibit among men the picture of a society living by this law of brotherhood, loving each his neighbour as himself, realizing that in God's sight all men are of equal spiritual worth, that there is a Divine justice which lays it down that a man shall have a right to realize his being by work, and by the due reward of work, and that it is the business of a society which obeys God to see to the realizing of this law.

In spite of the slanders and scandals and unpopularities which attached themselves to the Church, many things attracted men of better nature; partly the courage with which the early Christians faced death; partly the chastity of their young men and women, the like of which they had never seen; partly their honesty in business. But what, more than anything else, drew men to the Christian society was this spirit of brotherhood, obliterating, or going a long way to obliterate, the distinctions of wealth and poverty; at any rate, obliterating their extreme expressions, and creating a society in which there were no such marked differences.

Yet the Early Church was very far from being perfect. The most astonishing things happened, bringing down the sharpest rebuke. Just as in the middle of the early communism we find the sins and lies of the couple Ananias and Sapphira, so here in these churches to which St. James writes he sees a very glaring failure to realize their ideal in respect of their public worship. 'My brethren, can ye be said to hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ if ye show this respect of persons?' Then he describes a certain scene, which he implied was very often to be seen. 'If there come into your assembly, or synagogue, a man with a gold ring, in fine clothing, and there come also a poor man in vile raiment; and ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place, and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my foot-stool; are ye not then divided in your own minds and become judges of evil thoughts? Hearken, my beloved brethren'—and so he gives them very severe rebuke.

You will notice that in the spirit of the Old Testament prophets, and in the spirit of our Lord, St. James here and in other places treats wealth as a profound obstacle. We

cannot conceive anything more different from our customary attitude towards wealth than that which we find in the prophets, and in our Lord's words, and in St. Paul and St. James. That we should read these books, and recognize them as inspired, and continue to encourage the love of wealth as if it were just the normal ambition, is an amazing instance of moral blindness. You will remember that our Lord regarded wealth as a tremendous obstacle, because it made men feel themselves to be in a position in which they could claim to be treated with distinction. It obliterated the sense of the equal value of human souls, so He said it was harder for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of God. And that is the feeling of St. James.

Now it is of great importance that, as regards our own time, we should think about these principles. In our general attitude towards society and social arrangements, you know that for many centuries it has ceased to cost men anything to call themselves Christians, and it has been taken for granted that men would be Christians. I can see nothing so contrary to the mind of our Lord as that the state of society should arise in which people should be expected to become Christians without any real intention of being Christians in spirit. I believe the greatest of all needed reforms is that men should understand again that Christianity is a great adventure, and if you do not mean to make the adventure, it is worse to be baptized than to be not baptized. You had better be outside, and know you are not a Christian. Anyway you know how our modern industrial society was built up under these conditions. It was built up, in England especially, at a time when the prevailing philosophy was confessedly anti-Christian. Men had thought of Christianity as something which concerned their private individual souls, not the structure of society. It was built up on a professed philosophy of selfishness, and a hundred years ago it had a character of heartlessness which is almost inconceivable, even to us. Its brutalities upon women and children, its indifference to any kind of conception of justice, was almost inconceivable; and alas, the soul of the Church had been drugged. When the great Lord Shaftesbury began his lifelong struggle for justice and mercy he got very little help either from the Church or from the other religious bodies.

To-day I suppose we almost all of us recognize that the gaping contrasts between wealth and poverty are contrary to sanity and justice. I take it that, if we tried to go to the heart of the moral evil of our present industrial society, it would be found in the insecurity of occupation from which great masses of the workpeople suffer. We are all talking about the seriousness of the economic situation now, owing to unemployment. It is abnormal, but normally there is a vast state of insecurity affecting large masses of the population, and it must be acknowledged that the system of our industry has encouraged this, because it is supposed to be useful for industry that there should always be that margin of unemployed who can be taken in when they are wanted. Anyway, the situation is ominous and threatening. What we look for, and do not find, is that every communicant in Jesus Christ, everyone who belongs to the brotherhood which is the Christian Church, should feel this to be an intolerable burden. If Christians were as excited about this as they are about miserable matters of ceremonial, or trifling things; if every Christian, every communicant, every churchman, were as excited about these things as he is about matters which are of little account, we should get them altered. We do get things altered if enough people care desperately, if it is the constant matter of their prayers and anxieties and conversation; if it vexes, harasses, irritates, depresses, distresses; if they felt, they would alter it; if they felt it over a prolonged period of years, then there would be a movement for alteration and revision, which would take effect in the long run. That is what happens with regard to anything about which people care desperately. We cannot love Christ without loving His

brethren, and 'inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me.'

It is an idle mockery to call yourself a Christian and then not to care that your worship of Jesus in the sacraments, and your love of the service, and your orthodoxy counts, as He constantly told us, in the mind of Christ, for nothing, strictly nothing, unless it expresses itself in that spirit of brotherhood which makes the present constitution of industrial society unbearable to you. 'Inasmuch as ye did it not'—you know what He said. If people fulfil the royal law, according to the Scripture, thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, they do well, but if they have respect of persons, that is, judge unequally, and neglect these fundamental dictates of judgment and mercy, they commit sin, being convicted of the law as transgressors.

It is glorious to think of what God means mankind to be. It is glorious to think—indeed, it is that which keeps us up under the strain of life—that one day the Kingdom of God is going to come, and God is coming into His own, whether under the conditions of this present world or under others, and we are going to see the City of God one day. But that glorious hope lays upon us a corresponding obligation—'If ye obey the royal law.'[1]

The Rift in the Lute.

Ja. ii. 10.—'Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.'

In this, at first sight, somewhat mysterious sentence there is a profound psychological and spiritual meaning. The truth it contains is one which, on reflection, every serious-minded man will affirm. Briefly stated, it is this. Character is all of a piece, woven without seam throughout; goodness is one thing, with many manifestations, each one of which is consistent with all the rest. Every Christian virtue presumes the existence of every other in its possessor; or rather, there is but one virtue, which shows itself in various lights, and exhibits itself in diverse attitudes. There is only one virtue, whether it show itself as love, generosity, truthfulness, firmness, uprightness, humility, or what not; and the absence of any one so-called Christian virtue means that the rest are vitiated—not merely that the whole character is incomplete, but that every single virtue is incomplete by the absence of one.

The law that 'whosoever offendeth in one point is guilty of all' is simply the negative side of the positive guidance: 'Be ye holy, for God is holy.' Loyalty to God is to be ascertained not by counting the separate acts of our life, but by the spirit that animates them all; and if there be an evil deed that we *will* do, an evil passion that we *will* indulge, an evil habit that we *will not* break, at that point we have met God and refused Him our allegiance. It does not matter at what point the spinal cord is cut, if it be cut anywhere; the transmission of life is as effectually stopped as though the whole column were destroyed. If James had said that 'Whosoever doth not keep the whole Spirit of God keeps no part of it,' it would have been indeed a hard doctrine, a sentence of condemnation even on the best; for no one is perfect in that sense, and shortcomings and imperfections are not to be confounded with wilful perseverance in known transgression. But the Law deals with sins, and whoever sins with his will has, within the period of his sin, utterly broken with God. We are united to God by a chain of living obedience, of graces and virtues which are all one in spirit, and if we willingly sever it anywhere we have at that moment utterly fallen out of communion with the Inspirer of our life.

The great principle of engineering is that the strength of a thing is the strength of its weakest part. A rope, for instance: if in one place two of the strands are broken, that rope is only as strong as the one left. Or, a chain: if it has one poor link in it, what that link will hold is the measure of the chain's holding power. And so in larger, wider things—a bridge, with one pier shaky, or even a fortress

[1] C. Gore.

with one approach undefended. Suppose a general should say of the fort entrusted to him to hold: 'It is true that there is one point which I have not protected, but only see how impregnable we are everywhere else.' What sort of resistance would he be likely to offer? And what sort of defence would it be, to the courtmartial which would try him for unfaithfulness to his trust, if he should gravely urge that it was only a tenth of the whole circuit in his charge that he had neglected, and that therefore he ought not to be treated as guilty of losing the whole, but only of that tenth of it?

This mechanical principle rounds from mere material things into a parable of human character? The strength of a man's character is the strength of its weakest part. That is how we get the meaning of James' word about a man breaking the law at one place being guilty of all. If a man cannot stand the strain of life at one point, it is of no use for him to plead that if it had not taken him just there, he would not have given way. If he allow sin to enter into his life at one place, he has betrayed his trust, he has surrendered his character, no matter though in a score of other matters he is so strong as not even to feel temptation.

1. Many an otherwise fair, strong life has thus been broken down by the one weakness of intemperance. We have seen men against whose honour no whisper could be breathed;—able, diligent men, of kind, willing hearts,—men, even, with a great capacity for high thought and heroic action, but who have allowed themselves this one indulgence. Can they break this law of intemperance, and character be right in all the rest of it? That is what they think they may do, but they cannot. How often have we seen how this one indulgence has mastered all, and gradually held them in its accursed slavery till the clear brain has become clouded, and the strong hand tremulous, and the kind heart weak and maudlin, and the will that once was strong and prompt has been sodden till it is impotent except for sad and useless remorse,—and so, gradually, the whole life has miserably broken down.

¶ I used to think the text in James that 'he who offended in one point, offends in all' was very harsh; but I now feel the awful, the tremendous truth of it. In the one crime of OPIUM, what crime have I not made myself guilty of!—Ingratitude to my Maker! and to my benefactors injustice! and unnatural cruelty to my poor children!—self-contempt for my repeated promise—breach, nay, too often, actual falsehood![1]

2. We have seen young men growing up in strength and manliness, with cultured minds and high faculties, and noble impulses—young men of whom one has said that they will rise above the common level and make themselves a name and do something for the world in their day. But in those otherwise fair lives of promise there has been one rotten place, one corner of the heart in which uncleanness was allowed to lurk, and from which went forth the thoughts and longings of unhallowed lusts. And, little by little, like a cankering rust that uncleanness has spread, clogging the wheels of intellect, dimming the eye of hope and faith, polluting the springs of truthfulness and honour, and gradually changing high, noble ambitions into base and grovelling tastes. Thus that one spot, which seemed at first so small a thing, has gradually brought the whole life to a rotten worthlessness which, however it may still be decked in rich outward trappings, is really a life broken down and ruined.

¶ The gods had given me almost everything. But I let myself be lured into long spells of senseless and sensual ease. I amused myself with being a flâneur, a dandy, a man of fashion. I surrounded myself with the smaller natures and the meaner minds. I became the spendthrift of my own genius, and to waste an eternal youth gave me a curious joy. Tired of being on the heights I deliberately went to the depths in the search for new sensation. What the paradox was to me in the sphere of thought, perversity became to

[1] *Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, 206.

me in the sphere of passion. I grew careless of the lives of others. I took pleasure where it pleased me, and passed on. I forgot that every little action of the common day makes or unmakes character, and that therefore what one has done in the secret chamber one has some day to cry aloud from the house-top. I ceased to be lord over myself. I was no longer the captain of my soul, and did not know it. I allowed pleasure to dominate me. I ended in horrible disgrace.[1]

3. What is a little failing in truth or honesty that the life should be condemned for it? It is only like a little flaw in some great bridge over which the traffic of life goes hurrying day by day. 'It gives a little there,' someone says, 'but only a little; no danger of its really breaking down!' Thus has many a man assured himself in the first slight deviation from what we well call—in the same line of metaphor—unbending rectitude. He only 'gives' a little, he says, has to bend a little now and then beneath the weight of all the sudden pressures that come from the business and responsibility that pass over his daily life. There is no danger of his breaking down. But just as surely as, when the bridge has a weak, yielding place in it, some day a heavier train than usual will find it out, and the whole fall with cruel waste of life and treasure, so surely will the strain of some sudden and extra temptation come some day just upon that one little weakness in honesty, and the whole character that seemed so capable and strong will break down. So, many a life has broken down, in the ever intenser commercial strain of our time—characters that looked as strong and durable as a great railroad bridge, characters that men trusted without a hesitation or misgiving. But there was the weak spot somewhere, and they broke down, and dragged down hundreds in their ruin.

[1] Oscar Wilde, *De Profundis*.

Liberty and Law.

Ja. ii. 12.—'So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty.'

LIBERTY is a name to conjure with. Alike in the political and in the religious sphere it stands almost for the synonym of truth, of wisdom, of self-respect. In literature, ancient as well as modern, it is the very label of human greatness, heroism, and achievement. The most illustrious nations are precisely those that, whatever may have been their relative importance in point of size or power, were conspicuously free. Their liberty is the sufficient patent of a nobility which never provokes the resentments of the human reason: the symbol of a greatness which never fails to maintain its hold on human admiration. Greece, Judah, Florence, Switzerland, Britain stand in the record of history as the chosen homes of liberty, and their sons can be indifferent to the glory and excellence of liberty only by disowning their birthright. Proudly the lowliest Briton recalls the ancient freedom of his race, and finds a moral invigoration in the retrospect of his national past:—

In our halls is hung
Armoury of the invincible Knights of old:
We must be free or die, who speak the tongue
That Shakespeare spake; the faith and morals hold
Which Milton held.—In every thing we are sprung
Of Earth's first blood, have titles manifold.

The first object which arrests the gaze of the traveller as he approaches the city of New York from the sea is the great statue of Liberty at the entrance of the harbour, holding aloft a torch as if guiding the nations to the chosen land of freedom. Nowhere, indeed, in the world is there so ample a homage offered to liberty as in America. You see it in the carriage of the people; you read it in their newspapers; you are reminded of it in a thousand ways. The opening paragraph of the 'Declaration of Independence'

has sunk deeply into American minds, and seems to impregnate the American atmosphere: 'We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.'

But in our text liberty is strangely associated with another conception, and one which at first sight may seem to have little in common with it, the conception of law. There is almost a paradoxical aspect about the Apostle's phrase which compels reflection. What can be meant by 'a law of liberty'?

1. Take these two words, Liberty and Law. They stand over against each other. Our first conception of them is as contradictory. The history of human life, we say, is a history of their struggle. They are foes. Law is the restraint of liberty. Liberty is the abrogation, the getting rid of law. Each, so far as it is absolute, implies the absence of the other. It is a contradiction of terms to speak of them together. But the expression of our text suggests another thought: that by the highest standards there is no contradiction but rather a harmony and unity between the two; that there is some high point in which they unite; that really the highest law is liberty, the highest liberty is law; that there is such a thing as a law of liberty. That is the thing which we are to study and try to comprehend.

Earlier in the Epistle James has used a similar phrase, which evidently has the same reference. He speaks of 'the perfect law, the law of liberty,' which brings 'blessing' on the man who obeys it. When we consider what may be the origin of this strange phrase, we remember that the writer is a religious Jew, who, assuming that he is James the Lord's brother, has been brought into the closest relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. He is likewise a leading figure in the Christian Church, and has been intimately connected with the Apostle Paul, with whose characteristic teachings he was not wholly in sympathy. From these sources, the Jewish scriptures, the teaching of Christ and the Epistles of Paul, he may well have derived his notion of 'a law of liberty.' In the Psalms and the Prophets there is the same combination of liberty and law, as if the latter were the natural condition and pledge of the other. 'So shall I observe thy law continually for ever and ever. And I will walk at liberty; for I have sought thy precepts.' Such language is freely scattered over the Psalter. Jeremiah has spoken of a 'covenant' to come, in which the contradiction between law and liberty would cease because the righteous requirements of law would have become the free aspirations of the individual: 'This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my law in their inward parts, and in their heart will I write it.' The Rabbis had caught something of the prophet's thought when they said of the true student of the Law that he was free: 'Thou wilt find no freeman and whosoever is occupied in learning the Law, behold he exalts himself.'

In the Sermon on the Mount our Saviour had set in clear contrast an external obedience to specific legal requirements, and an internal acceptance of the very principle and purpose of the moral law; and had demanded of His disciples such an obedience as would bring them into true agreement with the very Author of the moral law: 'Ye therefore shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.' Paul, perhaps more completely than James, had understood the teaching of the Master, and had been guided by it not only to a triumphant vindication of Christian liberty against the yoke of Jewish legalism, but also to a firm grasp of the moral franchise inherent in discipleship. 'For the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus made me free from the law of sin and of death.' 'Being made free from sin, ye became servants of righteousness.' 'Where the spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.' We may, indeed, infer from the passionate urgency of the Apostle's language that his converts were scarcely able to rise to the truth which he taught them. The franchise of Christ was almost too great for those servile minds.

Anxiety and indignation are blended in Paul's remonstrances: 'With freedom did Christ set us free: stand fast therefore, and be not entangled again in a yoke of bondage.' 'For ye, brethren, were called for freedom; only use not your freedom for an occasion to the flesh, but through love be servants one to another.' That Paul had good reason for anxiety the subsequent fortunes of Christianity have abundantly shown. Even in the pages of the New Testament we have indications that the gospel of Christian liberty had been deplorably perverted into a teaching of licentiousness. We read of false teachers who 'promised liberty' to their dupes, 'while they themselves were bondservants of corruption.' It may be that James had such persons in mind when he coined his striking phrase—in which we can trace the influence of psalmist, prophet, Master, and colleague—'a law of liberty.'

2. What, then, is this mysterious union of contraries, this law of liberty? It can be expressed in one word—love. Love is at once the most free and the most bound of all things. We say habitually that one in love is 'captivated'—made prisoner. And yet the prison is his own choice. He would not lose his chain for all the world. It is to him a golden chain—the badge not of his servitude but of his empire. It represents the freest thing in his nature—the desire of his heart. My love is my heart's desire, my heart's hunger, my heart's prayer. It is the strongest exercise of will conceivable. Nothing shows the power of my will like my love. It is the power of my personality to pass out of itself and to claim a share in yours—to say, 'You are mine.' James is right when he says that love is the marriage of opposites—liberty and law. Love is at once the most self-subduing and the most self-revealing of all things. It gives its neck to the yoke; it becomes the slave of its object. It bears another's burden, it stoops to another's service, it carries another's care. But when my heart enters that prison-house it, for the first time, becomes free. It puts on fetters; but by its fetters it flies. It receives heavy weights; but by its weights it is winged. It contracts stringent ties; but its ties make its treasures. The bonds of love are the source of its boundlessness. Each new chain is a new chariot. I flower by self-forgetfulness. I grow when underground, I reach the bloom of summer in the burial of self.

¶ For thirty-eight years the Rev. J. B. McCullagh of Aiyansh laboured among the Indians of the Upper Nass River. What was the hidden source of his power and success?—the underlying and uplifting motive by which he was inspired?

Let his own pen give us the answer and reveal the secret. He had been describing the hard work of those early years of the mission when he was learning the language and afterwards when he was translating the Bible. Many times he tells us that he sat at his desk all night in order to get the quiet he needed for such work—the quiet which was denied him in the day-time through frequent interruptions on the part of the Indians. He went on to write: 'I *slaved* and *slaved*. Yes, I glory in the word Slave of Jesus Christ. . . . It rings like music in my ears; it thrills me; it buoys me up amid the waves of discouragement, more than does the hope of glory. I crave not for glory. "Thine is the glory, and I am Thy servant." I often wonder if we shall have work to do when we cross the border. I trust so: I love to look forward to *an eternity of work and worship* for Him who is my glorious Chief, perfect in every particular. To rise with Him into battle! The thought makes me feel like a flame of fire!'[1]

Make me a captive, Lord,
And then I shall be free;
Force me to render up my sword,
And I shall conqueror be.
I sink in life's alarms
When by myself I stand;
Imprison me within Thine arms,
And strong shall be my hand.

[1] J. W. Moeran, *McCullagh of Aiyansh*, 229.

My heart is weak and poor
Until it master find:
It has no spring of action sure—
It varies with the wind:
It cannot freely move
Till Thou hast wrought its chain;
Enslave it with Thy matchless love,
And deathless it shall reign.

My power is faint and low
Till I have learned to serve:
It wants the needed fire to glow,
It wants the breeze to nerve;
It cannot drive the world
Until itself be driven:
Its flag can only be unfurled
When Thou shalt breathe from heaven.

My will is not my own
Till Thou hast made it Thine;
If it would reach a monarch's throne
It must its crown resign:
It only stands unbent
Amid the clashing strife,
When on Thy bosom it has leant,
And found in Thee its life.[1]

FAITH AND WORKS.

Ja. ii. 14.—'What doth it profit my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works?'
Rom. iii. 28.—'Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law' (RV 'apart from the works of the law').

'I NEVER met with but one book in my life that was clear on the subject of works and faith, and that book is the Bible,' says Ruskin.[1]

But the Bible needs interpretation. Says Dr. John Watson:[2] 'One may believe that there is a unity between faith and good works, but one cannot shut one's eyes to the fact that throughout Holy Scripture there is an apparent conflict. If the Psalms magnify faith in God with all the resources of their passionate poetry, the same Psalms also declare that no one can have access unto the Eternal unless he keeps the law of God with all his heart and with all his strength. The second Isaiah may represent the Messiah as the sinbearer upon whom are laid the iniquities of us all, but Isaiah of Jerusalem beseeches his people not to put their trust in sacrifice but to wash their hands and make them clean by all godly living. In the Book of Revelation the saints wash their robes and make them white in the blood of the Lamb, but at the same time none can enter through the gates into the city except those who have kept the commandments of God. St. Paul devotes all the strength of his inspired reason to show that no man can be saved except through faith, and to hold up Abraham as a type of a believer; but St. James, his fellow-apostle and of the same period, insists that a man is saved not by faith, but by works, and uses Abraham as the exemplar of such works. And the Master Himself demands from beginning to end of His public ministry that people should believe, and seems to make everything of faith; and yet it is Jesus who declares that he only who keeps His words has built his house upon a rock, and that in the day of the Great Judgment it is charity that will win the prize. One might take the Bible in his hand and show that salvation is through works, and he also might take the same Bible and show that salvation is through faith; and it is not therefore wonderful that people with a bias either to the practical or to the mystical side of religion should entrench themselves in their favourable passages and build up their opposite theories of the religious life'.

This confusion would be dispelled if we were more careful to understand the meaning of the terms which we use as weapons. The moment that we grasp their true content, the controversy is practically at an end, and we find that two

[1] *Letters.*
[2] *The Doctrines of Grace*, 167.

[1] G. Matheson.

words have been put asunder which God has joined together. Of course if one is to define Faith as simply the intellectual belief of certain doctrines which have been formed in the schools, and which are sanctioned by the authority of the Church, then it is plain that salvation upon such a condition would be a non-moral and unspiritual salvation. Were people to congratulate themselves upon being in a state of grace because they hold the doctrine of the Holy Trinity and cry anathema upon those who deny it, then their faith would be a disaster to their souls, and their religion would be of none effect. And if any person should take Works at its lowest reading and count godly living to be nothing else than the punctilious and ostentatious discharge of certain obvious duties, then he would be very easily satisfied in religion and would simply be a somewhat shallow type of Pharisee.

I.

First, then, what is meant by Faith? The faith which is magnified in the Bible is no tepid belief, but a passionate conviction. It has really nothing to do with doctrines save in so far as they are the expression of religious experiences: it has to do from beginning to end with God revealed in Jesus Christ our Lord. It is the conviction that God is our Father, and has loved us from eternity, that Christ is the Saviour of the human soul and has laid down His life for us sinners. It is the conviction that Christ is able to deliver a man from his sins and to re-create him in the image of God. But it is, above all, the surrender of a man's whole being into the hands of Christ and a loyal purpose of obedience to Christ's commandments. It is not the faith that argues and speculates, it is the faith that repents and strives, that longs and loves. It is the faith that places a man under the dominion of the Spirit of God and under the sign of Christ's Cross.

Faith in this sense,—the passion of a man's whole nature—instead of being a mere ghost of the study, is the strongest principle in human life. Behind every brave endeavour and behind every lasting achievement lies faith; for the men who dared these things and the men who brought them to perfection have first of all been brave believers. Abraham, when he went out from his own land and made the chief departure in human history, and also Columbus, when he left the Old World in search of the New, went out in faith. The Apostles, when they established a new Kingdom amid the ruins of the decadent Roman Empire, and all reformers that have broken the shackles of slavery and led men into the land of promise, have walked by faith. No one in his home and no one in private life ever made a sacrifice with pain to himself, or ever rendered service with good to his neighbour, but was inspired and moved by faith. They that have not faith, and regard only the things which are seen, are cowards and selfish; they that behold the things which are not seen are strong and self-denying; so that the great periods of history have been periods of faith, and the ignoble periods have been periods when faith was dead.

¶ How does the New Testament describe faith? 'Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens.' This is what revelation means by faith—conviction, enthusiasm, sacrifice, heroism—the victory that overcometh self, sin, and the world. How far away to-day is the faith of thousands from this vital force! Our creed is in our memory, on our lips, it revolves in our imagination, we give a faint, general, unimpassioned assent to the supreme verities; but our so-called faith does not force its way into thought, experience, and conduct; it does not command our understanding, kindle our affections, energize our will, hallow our life. A heartfelt confidence in God and His Son Jesus Christ is quickening throughout the whole personality and life, as sunshine upon germs sown in honest ground; the traditional faith of the nominal believer is moonshine on snow. The faith

that worketh by love, purifying and kindling the heart, has the magical virtue of a summer's day which makes everything to live.[1]

II.

What is meant by Works? Let us return to Ruskin. In the letter already quoted he says: Read the Bible on the subject of Faith and Works. And I think you will come to the conclusion that though works are not the *price* of salvation, they are assuredly the *way* to it, and the only way. I do not mean the Way in the sense in which Christ is the Way, but the way in the sense of the Strait Gate. For Christ the Door is not strait, and Christ the Way not narrow. But the short of it is—Christ says—'When ye have *done* all that is commanded you, then say we are unprofitable servants.' He does not say—Do *nothing* that is commanded you, and all is right if you say you are unprofitable. Read the Sermon on the Mount. It is work, work, work, from beginning to end. And I believe all the divisions of Christians are caused by their hatred of the simple text—'Whoso heareth my words and *doeth* them.' The Romanists substitute paying and praying for doing; the Scotch, believing for doing; the English, reverence for doing; and so on. Plain taking up of the hard, heavy cross is the last thing with them all. Strive always to *do*—acknowledge continually that it is Christ which worketh in you, both to will and do. And you will soon know the doctrine whether it be of God.[2]

We do good works when Christ works in us. And how does Christ work in us? By faith. Works are the outcome of faith in Christ; they do not precede it. This is the whole question in dispute. The faith that is not followed by works is 'dead'; and the works that are not preceded by faith are 'dead.'

And the order affects the character of the works. The man who professes to produce works, but confesses that he has no faith, is apt to be high and lifted up, congratulating himself upon his strength and upon his independence, who has been able to do all these things without Jesus Christ. The measure of his moral success is in reality the reflection upon his unbelief. He has been careful to pay all the debts which he owed to trifling creditors; he ignores and refuses to pay his debts to his chief Creditor, who is God. He gives himself some trouble to show respect to his fellow-men, according to the claims which they have upon him of honour or of charity; but one Man he selects for rejection and indignity, and that is the Man who laid down His life upon the Cross that he might be saved. He takes credit to himself because no good cause has ever appealed in vain to him, and no high ideal has ever been unadmired by his soul; and yet it is this very man who passes by the invitation of God's Kingdom, and will have none of the cross of Christ. What value in character shall we assign to the soul which admires all spiritual beauty except the beauty of Christ, which gives welcome to all love except the perfect love of God, which is ready to do every good work except the chief work of all, and that is faith in Christ?

¶ Luther's opposition between faith and works is nothing more than an exaltation of the personality as a whole, new-born in Christ, above the individual deeds in which it is expressed. He explains this by a simple Biblical illustration from Nature: good and pious works by no means make a good and pious man, but a good and pious man good and pious works. Evil works by no means make an evil man, but an evil man does evil works. So that in every case the person must first be good and pious, as a preliminary to all good works, and good works come from the good and pious person. In like manner Christ says: 'An evil tree bears no good fruits; a good tree bears no evil fruits.' Now it is plain that fruits do not bear the tree; so too the trees do not grow upon the fruits. As then the trees must be first, and afterwards the fruits, and the fruits make the trees neither good nor evil, but the trees the fruits; so must the man in his own person first be

[1] W. L. Watkinson, *The Ashes of Roses*, 206.
[2] *Letters*.

pious or evil, before he does good or evil works.[1]

Given true faith, the rest follows, as flowers from seed and light from the rising sun. The spiritual life is thus the effortless life, and at the same time the life of abundant stress. It is beautifully and profoundly simple, and yet in some respects harder than the severest legalism, in that it makes demands upon faculties which, with the majority of men, are yet in abeyance. The secret seems to lie in learning to live from the Goal as a centre, rather than in pressing towards it as an object of distant attainment.

III.

There is therefore no antagonism between Works and Faith. Works are the evidence of Faith, and Faith has its necessary outcome in Works. The true antithesis is between *earning* salvation and receiving it as a gift of God's bounty.[2]

1. Works, then, complete faith, or, in the language of James, 'by works is faith made perfect.'

(1) *Works reveal the worker to himself.*—A man cannot have a proper faith in God until he has a proper distrust of himself. But when he sets himself to some long or irksome task simply because it is right, before he is done he will know his own weakness and his own need. Such work teaches us how much we need God, and when a man knows how much he needs God, his faith is made perfect.

¶ No man ever emerges from a long and difficult task the same as when he entered upon it. He has found out something about his work, and something about himself. He thought once that work would be the road to fame or happiness. He thought himself capable of prosecuting that work with success. And now at the end of it he has gained a vast knowledge of the relation of that work to happiness or fame, and a vast knowledge of his own resources small or great and how they have been diminished or increased. Read the story of the boring of the Alpine tunnels, the cutting of the Suez Canal, the building of the Forth Bridge, or any similar gigantic enterprise, and you will find this fact in all the stories: the actual carrying out of the plans cast a light on the tools or the materials or the difficulties, a light which not one of the great engineers anticipated.[1]

(2) *Works earnestly done for God reveal God.*—On this it would be easy to appeal to the testimony of men whose achievements still resound in the history of Christendom. With one voice they say: 'Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name be the glory.' If we look into the marvellous results of the work of Martin Luther, John Bunyan, George Whitefield, William Carey, and Abraham Lincoln, we cannot but see that, after allowing for their personal genius and prowess and determination, what happened was that they called into operation forces immeasurably larger than their own, and these forces produced the immense results.

¶ John Wesley was drawing to the end of his days. On his death-bed he thought of William Wilberforce and of the gallant but apparently hopeless struggle by which that dauntless reformer was endeavouring to overthrow slavery. Mr. Wesley determined to send him a message of encouragement. 'My dear sir,' he wrote, 'unless the divine power has raised you up to be, like Athanasius, against the world, I see not how you can go through with your glorious enterprise in opposing that execrable villainy which is the scandal of religion, of England, and of human nature. Unless God has raised you up for this very thing, you will be worn out by the opposition of men and devils. But, *if God be for us, who can be against us?* Are all of them together stronger than He? Go on in the name of God!'[2]

2. Faith is not faith if it is not completed

[1] K. von Hase, *Handbook to the Controversy with Rome*, ii., 11.
[2] W. Sanday, and A. C. Headlam, *The Epistle to the Romans* (*ICC*), 57.

[1] J. M. Witherow, *Grapes of God*, 89.
[2] F. W. Boreham, *A Casket of Cameos*, 104.

by works. Could there be any more ghastly irony than a human being declaring his faith in God, and refusing to keep His laws; calling himself by the name of Christ, and denying Christ's cross; accepting his fellow-men as his brethren in Christ, and not doing them even a stranger's service? How can he have learned to call God Father, whom he has never seen, when he does not treat his fellow-man as a brother, whom he has seen? How can his sins have been forgiven of God—sins which were as scarlet and red like crimson—when he will not forgive his neighbour the trifling transgressions of human life? How can he be partaker of the Divine grace, whose poverty-stricken soul is not bearing the scanty fruits of common morality? Can it be in the reason of things that an ungrateful, unloving, dishonest and unrighteous person is saved? When we ask the question, it answers itself: without works there is no faith; and this man is walking in a vain show, and feeding his soul with wind. His exposure will come in some moral crisis of life, when, forsaken of the grace which he has abused, he falls into gross sin, or when, in the light of eternity, his refuges of lies and coverings of hypocrisy will be burned up.

¶ We are assured that an educated Hindu will pass an examination in hygiene and then look on complacently while every imaginable sanitary law is violated within the walls of his own compound. He does not so realize his science as to appreciate its practical import, he is content with the abstruse knowledge, never proceeding to apply it. Does that faith save him? Is the educated Hindu in his filthy compound delivered by his abstract knowledge from enteric plague, cholera? We know that his theoretic science gives him no immunity whatever; he falls a victim to the prevailing epidemic just as readily as do those who never heard of any science of health. Likewise the nominal saint masters the creeds, sometimes so thoroughly that he could pass a theological examination, and then in actual experience and conduct violates every great spiritual and moral law. Will *his* faith save him? Nay, *does* it save him? Does it save him from guilty fear, filling his heart with the peace of God's adopted children? Does it save him from the power of passion and selfishness, strengthening him to live in purity and love? Does it save in the day of temptation, enabling the tempted one to put away the evil thing? Does it save in the day of trouble, bringing strong consolation into the stricken heart? As the theoretic knowledge of the Hindu who practically disregards sanitary law cannot save him from disease and death, so the notional ghostly faith of the nominal Christian is not able to save him from over-mastering passion, sloth, sadness, and sin. And what fails to save here and now is not likely to save elsewhere and hereafter. That faith, and that faith alone, which is genuine enough and strong enough to bring peace and purity now can secure us eternal salvation. What stops with fancy and dreams is of little count in any department of life, least of all in questions of character and destiny.[1]

¶ True faith can no more be without true holiness, than true fire without heat.[2]

IV.

We are now in a position to understand the apparent contradiction between Paul and James.

In Rom. iii. 28, St. Paul says, 'Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.' In James ii. 24, St. James says, 'Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.' Here the Apostle James asserts as strenuously that a man is justified *by faith and works* as Paul asserts that a man is justified *by faith without works*. Luther for a season was so perplexed by the twofold representation that he was tempted to reject the Epistle of James as apocryphal. He said that it was 'an epistle of straw'—mere chaff. For he was sure that any doctrine that is in opposition to the doctrine of Paul must be apocryphal and erroneous. It could not be from God. He was

[1] W. L. Watkinson, *The Ashes of Roses*, 207.
[2] *The Golden Book of John Owen*, 232.

right in this assurance. The doctrine of Paul stands for ever. It is immovable, unalterable. It is vital to the everlasting gospel. Without it there can be no gospel, and no salvation for sinners. But the doctrine of James is equally real, and immovable, and vital, and Divine. And when one gets to know that God, like all other judges, official and unofficial, may justify or condemn in several respects, one gets to see that there is not the shadow of a shade of discrepancy between the two doctrines.

When the Psalmist says, 'No man living can be justified before God,' he does not contradict the Apostle, who says that 'God justifieth the ungodly.' Not in the least. They speak of justification *in different respects;* and the utterances of both are perfectly and absolutely correct in their respective spheres. The Psalmist speaks of man *in respect of the law;* —and in this respect no man living can be justified by God, for man is a transgressor of the law. The Apostle Paul speaks of a man *in respect of Christ and the work of Christ;* and in this respect any man living, however ungodly, may be justified; for in Christ there is a 'propitiation for the sins of the whole world,' a righteousness which is a most valid title to everlasting life, and bliss, and glory.

The verses quoted bring out, with startling effect, the contrast between the manner in which Divine truth is revealed in the Scriptures themselves and that in which it is exhibited in those schemes of systematic theology which men have constructed from the Scriptures. In the latter, everything is trim and symmetrical; all appearance of conflicting statement is smoothed away; every term has its precise scientific meaning; every proposition is derived with logical exactness from those that precede it, and made to harmonize with all the rest. In the New Testament the language is popular; there is no pretension to scientific accuracy of statement; each truth is presented as occasion requires it, without any laborious effort to shape it into symmetry with others. All are poured forth in artless confidence that there can be no real disagreement between any of the truths which the Parent of all truth has revealed. And, after all, it is when it is thus presented that we form our loftiest conceptions of the scheme of Divine truth. As men have conceived it, it is something which the eye of man can take in at one view, the connection of whose various parts it can discern, and also the mutual dependence of the whole. As the sacred writers beheld it, the structure is too vast to be scanned thus compendiously: no single aspect of many-sided truth discloses it in its completeness; it needs to be contemplated from different, nay from opposite, points of view, before we can form any idea of the wondrous whole. Now it is in the study of the seeming contradictions of Scripture that we find our best corrective to partial and defective notions of Christian doctrine. The best of those systematized schemes is like a map of some extensive country, drawn in flat, which represents its outlines with unavoidable distortions of projection; but by combining pictures taken from different points of view the solid forms may be made to stand before us with stereoscopic faithfulness.

Thus, when the seeming contradictions of Scripture are explored, it is found that the one passage only supplies the checks and limitations necessary for the right understanding of the other. From the combination of the two a truer, deeper meaning is elicited.

1. First of all, the two Apostles are dealing with two different errors. Paul is contending against a self-righteous Pharisaism, which boasted of its 'works,' and he vehemently denies that such 'works' can aid in man's justification. James, on the contrary, has before him the case of those who thought that a barren orthodoxy was sufficient, and looked for justification from the correctness of their creed. To them he says that such a faith, apart from works, is dead.

What led Paul to formulate his doctrine of salvation through faith was the attempt of the Judaising party to impose upon Gentile converts, as a condition of salvation more or less co-ordinate with faith, an observance of the

main prescriptions of the Levitical law. This attempt he met with the watchword, not faith and works, but faith only. In vindicating faith's title to be the sole and sufficient condition of salvation, his main argument is its gospel (Gal. iii., Rom. iv.). Since the gospel congruence with the nature of the Christian comes as a revelation of Divine grace and of a righteousness freely offered to guilty men, the fitting response on man's part can be nothing else than a humble and thankful acceptance of the gift. Putting away the proud thought that we can stand on our own merits, secure justification by our own works of righteousness, we must believe in Him who justifies the ungodly. To build anything on works is to withdraw from the dispensation of grace to that of recompense; it is to lapse from the gospel into legalism.

2. In the next place, just because they deal with different situations, they use the words 'faith' and 'works' in somewhat different senses.

(1) What is 'faith' with St. Paul? An act of the whole interior being, of the mind accepting Christ as true, the affections responding to His love, the will bowing to His sovereignty.

¶ I cannot define 'faith' as anything less than the response of man's whole nature to God. And that response of the whole nature must involve each of the distinctive activities of man's nature as a centre of knowledge, will, and affection, and in a true faith God must be known as the sole God, chosen as the sole Goal, and loved as the sole Object of desire.[1]

¶ With Luther as with Paul faith is a life-principle. 'Faith is not man's opinion and dream, which some take to be faith.'[2] He speaks of some who 'when they hear the gospel immediately devise, from their own powers, the imagination in their hearts to which they give expression in the words: 'I believe.' This they regard as right faith. Nevertheless, it is nothing but man's thought and imagination, which is never experienced at heart; hence it accomplishes nothing, and no amendment follows.'[1] 'Faith is a divine work in us, which transforms us.' 'Faith is a living, wide-awake confidence in God's grace, that is so certain that one who has it is ready to die a thousand times for it.'[2]

(2) James is not ignorant of the true nature of faith. To him, as well as to Paul, faith was the first and great demand of the gospel of Christ, and the characteristic force of the Christian life. But here James is not speaking of the faith that justifies, that is, that makes a man just before God, apart from those works of the law which the man does (which is the faith Paul speaks of in Rom. iii. 28) or of faith in general. He does not ask, 'Can faith save him?' But he does ask, 'Can *that* faith save him?' What faith? It is a faith which is a mere cold, intellectual apprehension of a fact. 'Thou believest that there is one God'; that is, believest that He exists; 'thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble' (Ja. ii. 19). The faith here described is simply the appreciation of a fact; it is not directly moral at all.

(3) Their use of the word 'works' also differs. What is St. Paul thinking of when he speaks of 'works'? Not Christian acts in which faith energizes, but acts, right enough, it may be, in themselves, but done in a legalist spirit, as if so many of them would strictly entitle a man to claim God's favour as wages due.

In St. Paul's writing this word, standing without any qualifying adjective, is always used in a *depreciatory* sense. When he would speak of works which are intrinsically good, he adds the qualifying adjective 'good' (Rom. ii. 7, xiii. 3; 2 Cor. ix. 8; Eph. ii. 10, etc.). It is, however, of such *good works* that St. James is speaking—works which are really included in that faith which is defined as one which '*worketh* by love.'

(4) With St. James 'works' are acts of faith, the results of active faith, its proper

[1] P. Green, in *The Constructive Quarterly*, vol. ii. No. 5, p. 137. [124.

[2] *Introduction to Romans* (1522), Erlangen, 63: 124.

[1] *Introduction to Romans* (1522), Erlangen, 63: 124.

[2] H. E. Jacobs, *Martin Luther*, 363.

fruits. There is no hint of any idea of 'works of law.' The comparison with benevolence brings this out quite clearly: an arrested benevolence which stops at the kind word and does not express itself in act, in its natural effects and fruits, is useless. In fact both cases are instances of the hearing without doing which St. James has already deprecated.

¶ The essential consistency of the two representations will be best exhibited by a change in the translation of the two critical words as St. James uses them. When we read St. Paul's letters to the Romans or Galatians, let us still say 'faith and works'; when we read St. James, let us say 'belief and acts' or 'deeds.'[1]

3. But the difference between the two is more upon the surface than in the heart of things. Both writers imply that God holds no communion with man over mere results of human activity in which the moral nature is unexpressed. The mere intellectual conviction, and the mere catalogue of works done, have not necessarily any moral significance whatever. Intellectual conviction may coexist with the most hopeless moral wickedness; the execution of the law may be mechanical, without moral purpose or motive. In both writers a demand is made for a real manifestation of moral affinities, a real moral type of character. It would be difficult to express the combination of the two points of view better than in the words of our Lord in John, vi. 28, 29: 'They said therefore unto him, What must we do, that we may work the works of God?' They ask the question from the legal point of view; their inquiry seems to anticipate a list of positive precepts. But Christ's answer changes the whole atmosphere of the discussion. 'This is the work of God,' He says, 'that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.' All works are swallowed up in the one work, faith in Christ.

¶ That is a very instructive anecdote which Saint Simon relates respecting the last hours of the profligate Louis XIV. 'One day,' he says,—'the king recovering from loss of consciousness asked his confessor, Père Tellier, to give him absolution for all his sins. Père Tellier asked him if he suffered much. 'No,' replied the king, 'that's what troubles me. I should like to suffer more, for the expiation of my sins.' Here was a poor mortal who had spent his days in carnality and transgression of the pure law of God. He is conscious of guilt, and feels the need of its atonement. And now, upon the very edge of eternity and brink of doom, he proposes to make his own atonement, to be his own redeemer and save his own soul, by offering up to the eternal nemesis that was racking his conscience a few hours of finite suffering, instead of betaking himself to the infinite passion and agony of Calvary. This is a 'work'; and, alas, a *'dead work,'* as St. Paul so often denominates it. This is the method of justification by works.[1]

[1] W. Bright, *The Law of Faith*, 202.

V.

Let us consider 'faith and works' in relation to justification.

1. Justification is by faith alone. Paul does not use the word 'alone,' and Luther has been blamed for introducing that word into the translation of Rom. iii. 28. There was no necessity for its introduction, but it does undoubtedly express the Apostle's meaning. The expressions 'by faith alone,' and 'by faith alone without works,' are the watchwords of Luther's theology, often designated by unfriendly critics as 'solifidianism.' By these statements he only means to declare that man is justified before God, *i.e.*, forgiven and accounted righteous, only by the work and merit of Christ, and that these merits are applied and appropriated only through faith. And with that the thought of St. Paul agrees.

¶ Some time ago, I was in Rome; and, among other objects of interest, I saw there a famous staircase. It is called Pilate's Staircase, because of a tradition that it was once

[1] W. G. T. Shedd, *Sermons to the Natural Man*, 413.

the staircase of the Judgment Hall of Pilate in Jerusalem—the staircase on which Jesus descended, when the Roman governor, looking upon Him, said—'Behold the man!' When I saw it, there were a number of poor devotees struggling up the staircase upon their knees, without venturing to touch the steps with their hands; and on each step they were muttering a prayer. What was the meaning of this? It just meant that, by this act of penance they hoped to commend themselves to God, and to do something thereby to earn eternal life.

Yet this was the very staircase upon which, as he climbed it, divine light visited the soul of Martin Luther. As he was laboriously making his way up the *Scala Santa,* uttering an incantation on each step, he seemed to hear a voice sounding in his ear—'The just shall live by faith.' Rising to his feet, he made his way back to Germany. It was no human voice that had spoken in his ear, but the voice of the living Spirit of the living God. And soon he was proclaiming in trumpet tones, which compelled the attention of Germany and of the world, the grand central doctrine of the Reformation—justification by faith alone.[1]

¶ The exclusive term 'alone,' when we say that we are justified by faith alone, is only meant to exclude any other instrument on man's part for *receiving,* and is not intended to exclude God's instruments for *bestowing* justification. Thus faith is as it were the hand, and the *only* hand, which man can stretch forth to receive the blessing; while the sacraments of the gospel may be regarded as the channels through which God conveys the blessing to the faithful soul that is able to receive it.[2]

¶ The Council of Trent maintained that there were six other virtues, as they call them, which all concurred with faith in obtaining for men the grace of justification. They did not, indeed, assign to these virtues, or even to faith itself, any power of justifying, properly so called, but only that of preparing or disposing men to justification. They did, however, deny the Protestant doctrine, that faith is the only thing in men themselves by which they are justified; and they denied this, in the way of ascribing to these six other virtues the very same relation to justification, and the very same kind of influence in producing or procuring it, which they ascribe to faith. These six virtues are—fear, hope, love, penitence, a purpose of receiving the sacrament, and a purpose of leading a life of obedience; and Bellarmine, and other defenders of the doctrine of the Church of Rome, labour to prove from Scripture that these qualities, or states of mind and feeling, are represented there as procuring or obtaining for men the forgiveness of their sins, and the enjoyment of God's favour.[1]

¶ 'People quote various words of the Lord,' said Bishop Prince Lee of Manchester in his last hours to Bishop Westcott, 'as containing the sum of the Gospel, the Lord's Prayer, the Sermon on the Mount, and the like: to me the essence of the Gospel is in simpler, shorter terms, "Fear not, only believe" (quoting the words in Greek). Ah! Westcott, mark that "only," ' and his eyes filled with tears as he spoke.[2]

2. Justification by works is impossible. This is stated or assumed throughout Scripture. In point of fact, the idea that men should either vindicate their own innocence or rectitude, or that they of themselves, or any creature for them, should establish a right relation between God and themselves, by acts or sacrifices, or anything of their own, is totally alien from the spirit and life that produced the writings which constitute our Bible. Passages, indeed, in which all manner of good deeds are required, whilst contempt is cast on sacrifices and the like, may seem and are often taken to imply that by right conduct men can set themselves right with God; but this is by no means their import. As *fruits* of a right relation, both sacrifices and right conduct are obligatory and pleasing to God; as *means of establishing a right relation,*

[1] C. A. Salmond, *For Days of Youth*, 191.
[2] E. C. S. Gibson, *The Thirty-Nine Articles*, 404.

[1] W. Cunningham, *Historical Theology*, ii. 61.
[2] *Letters of Forbes Robinson.*

the one is an abomination, the other utterly insufficient.

Where is the man who is confident that even his best deeds are free from any admixture of unworthy ends or motives? Who can offer himself with his holiest conduct as being stainless or free from taint, or as being worthy of God's acceptance? We are not in a position absolutely to analyse or determine our motives. The moment we begin to look in upon our motives or any of our mental states the whole position is changed and we are found examining something else. We can inspect only what we remember of our thoughts and feelings. Thus it is impossible by introspection to know exactly what our motives are, and the probability is that our feelings are generally more mixed than we suppose. To base our justification upon our works, even if they have been uniformly good, is indeed an uncertain foundation.

¶ Cromwell writes: 'Acts of obedience are not perfect, and therefore yield not perfect Grace. Faith, as an act, yields it not; but "only" as it carries us into Him, who is our perfect rest and peace; in whom we are accounted of, and received by the Father,—even as Christ Himself. This is our high calling. Rest we here, and here only.' Upon which Carlyle remarks: 'Even so, my noble one! The noble soul will, one day, again come to understand these old words of yours.' [1]

3. Justification by faith alone does not make good works of no account. On the contrary it makes them inevitable, and secures that they shall be truly good. The faith that identifies us with Christ for pardon and acceptance is the faith that sweetly binds us up with Him for all holy living. There is an inseparable tie between these two things, forgiveness and holiness. It is this gracious union to Christ that constrains us to the integrity of uprightness, to the very principle and requirement of the 'law of the spirit of life that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.'

¶ The faith that will stand us in stead at the last is the faith that is one with love, and works by love. It is only as it finds expression that it is real faith at all. As St. Bernard says, '*Mors fidei est separatio charitatis*'—the death of faith is separation from love.[1]

The darkened chamber held the maiden dead.
Her name was Faith. Of long neglect she
died.
And now men rose and shook themselves and
cried,
'O Faith, come back,—come back ere Hope be
fled!'
But she lay silent on her solemn bed,
And men grew piteous at their prayer denied;
They said 'No more is man to man allied;
We fall asunder—and the world,' they said.
And while they talked, behold a gracious form,
And Love beside the pillow bending low:
'We live and die together, she and I.'
So then he kissed her, and her flesh grew
warm;
She woke and faced them with a ruddy glow.
If Love be living, Faith can never die.[2]

Friendship with God.

Ja. ii. 23.—'He was called the friend of God.'

Who called him so? Men called him so. The men of his own day called him so. Melchizedek, who met him but once, knew immediately that he was a friend of God. It is impossible to mistake some men, even if you meet them only once. Two men, strangers to one another, met David Hill one day, and one said to the other: 'I've met a man to-day who makes me think of what the Apostle Paul must have been.' And the other said, 'Well that's a singular thing, but I was thinking exactly the same thing myself.' And the men who knew Abraham day by day called him by this name. A sweet fate to have that as the brief record of a character, and to be known throughout the ages by such an epitaph! As many of us are aware, this name, 'the Friend,' has displaced

[1] *Cromwell's Letters*, 17, 190, quoted in *An Outline of the Doctrines of Thomas Carlyle*, 251.

[1] H. L. Goudge, *Thoughts for Dark Days*, 62.
[2] *Edward Cracroft Lefroy*, 145.

the proper name, Abraham, on the lips of all Muhammadan people to this day; and the city of Hebron, where his body is supposed to lie, is commonly known simply as 'the Friend.'

Let us take two or three of the salient elements and characteristics of friendship as exercised on the human level, and use these as a standard and test of our religion and relation to God.

1. Friends *love and trust one another.* Mutual confidence is the mortar which binds the stones in society into a building. It makes the difference between the herding together of beasts and the association of men. No community could keep together for an hour without mutual confidence, even in regard to the least intimate relationships of life. But it is the very life-blood of friendship. For any vivid, warm throb of friendship there must be, first, a clear knowledge, and then a living grappling of that knowledge to our very heart. Unless we trust God we cannot be friends with God. If we are His friends we shall trust Him, and He will trust us. For this friendship is not one-sided, and the name, 'friend,' though it may be ambiguous as to whether it means one whom I love or one who loves me, really includes both persons to the compact; and there are analogous, if not identical, emotions in each.

From one, to one, in one to see *All Things,*
  To see the King of Kings
But once in two; to see His endless treasures
  Made all mine own, myself the end
Of all his labours! 'Tis the Life of Pleasures!
  To see myself His friend!
Who all things finds conjoined in Him alone,
  Sees and enjoys the Holy One.[1]

2. Friends *have frank, familiar intercourse with one another.* Let us turn to the example in our text, and remember God's frankness with Abraham. 'Shall I hide from Abraham the thing that I will do?' Let us cap that—as we can, marvellous and great as the utterance is—by another one: I 'call you not servants . . . but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.' So much for God's frankness. What about Abraham's frankness with God? Remember how he remonstrated with Him; how he complained to Him of His dealings; how he persisted with importunity, which would have been presumptuous but for the friendship which underlay it, and warranted the bold words. And let us take the simple lesson, that if we are friends and lovers of God we shall delight in intercourse with Him. It is a strange kind of religion that does not care to be with God, that would rather think about anything else than about Him, that is all unused to quiet, solitary conversation and communion with Him; but it is the religion of many of us to-day. He would be a strange friend that never crossed your threshold, or who was ill at ease till he got away from you, or who, when he came, was struck dumb, and had not a word to say for himself, did not feel that he and you had any interests or subjects in common. Is that not a good deal like the religion of hosts of professing Christians? 'He was called the friend of God,' and he never, all his days, if he could help it, thought about Him or went near Him!

¶ I have never forgotten the impression that one word of Bishop Andrewes in one of his confessions of sin made on my own imagination and heart the first time it leaped out upon me. 'I have neglected thee, O God!' Andrewes cried, and I trembled as I heard him cry it. And I have never come upon that awful word from that day to this without a shudder. It is this neglect of God that makes so many men infidels and atheists and outcasts. You neglect God till you come to say, and that not without some reason, that there simply cannot be such and such a God else it would be a sheer impossibility that you could have neglected Him as you have done. You look within, and you look around, and you see yourself and all men absolutely pushing God aside till it is as good as demonstrated to you that there can be no God. 'God,' said John Donne in a sermon that Andrewes may

[1] Traherne.

very well have heard, 'God is like us in this also, that He takes it worse to be slighted, to be neglected, to be left out, than to be actually injured. Our inconsideration, our not thinking of God in our actions, offends Him more than our sins.' . . . And in an evening prayer that Andrewes draws out for a family in the *Institutiones Piæ*, he makes them all say, 'We have fled from Thee seeking us: neglected Thee loving us: stopped our ears to Thee speaking to us: turned our backs to Thee reaching Thy hand to us: forgotten Thee doing good to us: and despised Thee correcting us.'[1]

3. Friends *delight to meet each other's wishes.* Let us go back to our story again. The humble, earthly friend of God obeyed Him substantially all his life, from the day when he made the 'Great Choice,' and left behind him home and kindred and all, until the day when he went up the sides of Moriah to offer there his son. Abraham met God's wishes because Abraham trusted and loved God.

And what about the Divine Friend? Did He not meet Abraham's wishes? You remember that wonderful scene, which presents in such vivid and dramatic form, the everlasting truth that the man who bows his will to God bows God's will to his, when he pleaded for Sodom, and won his case by persistence and importunity of lowly prayer. If we are God's lovers and friends, we shall find nothing sweeter than bowing to His will and executing His commands. The very mark and signature of love is that it delights to divine and fulfil the desires of the beloved, and that it moulds the will of each of the parties into conformity with the will of the other.

¶ Doing God's work is a great thing; doing God's will is a greater.[2]

4. Friends *give gifts to each other.* What did Abraham give God? 'Forasmuch as he hath not withheld his only son from me, I know that he fears me.' And what does God give to His friends? We read 'He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?' Abraham's gift of his son to God was but a feeble shadow of God's gift of His Son to men. And if the surrender on the part of the human friend was the infallible token of his love, surely the surrender on the part of the heavenly Friend is no less the infallible sign of His love to all the world. Generalize these thoughts and they come to this. If we are God's lovers God will give us Himself, in so far as we can receive Him; and all other gifts in so far as they are good and needful. If we are God's friends and lovers we shall give Him, in glad surrender, our whole selves. If we feel that we have separate interests from Him, we keep certain things and do not let Him say, 'These are Mine.' If we grudge sacrifice, will not hear of self-surrender, are living lives centred in, ruled by, devoted to, self, we have little reason to call ourselves Christians. There is no friendship if self shuts out the friend from participation in what is the other's. As long as 'mine' lies on this side of a high wall, and 'thine' on the other, there is but little friendship. Let us down with the wall, and say about everything, 'Ours'; then we shall have a right to say 'friends of God.'

To Thee, O Jesu, I direct mine eye,
To Thee my hands, to Thee my humble knees;
To Thee my heart shall offer sacrifice,
To Thee my thoughts, Who my thoughts only sees.
To Thee my self, my self and all I give;
To Thee I die, to Thee I only live.[1]

5. Friends *stand up for each other.* 'I am thy shield; fear not, Abraham,' said God, when His friend was in danger from the vengeance of the Eastern kings whom he had defeated; and all through life the same strong arm was cast around him. Abraham, on his part, had to stand up for God amidst his

[1] A. Whyte, *Thirteen Appreciations*, 106.
[2] Miriam Booth.

[1] Sir Walter Raleigh.

heathen neighbours. If we are God's friends and lovers He will take up our cause. And if God be for us, it matters not who is against us. And if we are God's friends and lovers we have to take up His cause. God trusts His reputation to us Christian people; He has interests in this world that we have to look after. We have to defend Him as really as He has to defend us. And it is the dreadful contradiction of religious people's profession of religion that they often care so little, and do so little, to promote the cause, to defend the name, to adorn the reputation, and to further in the world the interests, of their heavenly Friend.

¶ The other day I was down at a beautiful little place called Rhosilly, down on the Gower peninsula not far from my now present home; and I was looking, as I always do in an old church, to see what interesting things I could find. In the belfry vestry I found a ship's bell hanging and I looked at it; I tapped it, and it was dead and dull, and I looked, and the whole of the bottom of the bell was plugged with a disc of wood, and in the side of the bell they had cut a door, and there was a hinge and a padlock on it. They were using that old ship's bell for a strong box. Very useful but not what the bell was made for. There are many Christians made by the Lord to be bells to sound out the notes of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, to tell of the love and the power of Him, to witness of Him, and what are they? They are just strong boxes, and you cannot get any sound out of them. They take all in, and they give nothing out, and they pride themselves on being saints or saved.[1]

¶ 'Art thou Brother Francis of Assisi?' said a peasant once to the saint. 'Yes.' 'Try then to be as good as all think thee to be, because many have great faith in thee, and therefore I admonish thee to be nothing less than people hope of thee.'

Here spoke the deepest heart of humanity, and so speaks it to-day. Our chief debt to our fellows is the obligation to be good, to live the highest life we know. Beneath the world's cynicism lives the consciousness that its chief treasure, its rarest product, its pearl of price is the saint's supernatural life. When humanity sees this plant growing in the wilderness, it takes heart in its journeying, knowing it is not forsaken of God.[1]

[1] H. C. Lees.

Speech.

Ja. iii. 2.—'If any man offend not in word, he is a perfect man.'

THERE is a close connection between this passage and the passage that immediately precedes it. One great reason why our so-called faith is so valueless is that we allow it to evaporate in talk, instead of translating it into action. In the Jewish Christian communities with which James had to deal this evil was especially rife. With them, as with the Corinthian Christians, everyone had a teaching, a revelation, a tongue, an interpretation, and the result was disastrous. So far from doing any good, all this talking did actual harm both to the speakers and to the hearers. Now, we English Christians are not, as a rule, guilty of misusing our tongues in precisely the same way as the Jewish Christians misused theirs. We do not, as a rule, take the same interest in religious questions, nor are we, as a rule, accustomed to give so much time to the discussion of them. But though this is so with most of us, there are exceptions. There are those now, as then, to whom religion is not only religion, but, if we may so say, a hobby as well, and who are assailed by the dangers of which James speaks. Moreover, it is not only in matters of religion that we misuse our tongues. Our tongues run away with us when we speak of other matters.

James gives these instances of the misuse of speech.

1. He urges upon us, in the first place, humility and caution in our efforts to instruct other people. 'Do not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that we shall receive heavier judgment. For in many things we all stumble.' The man who sets

[1] J. Brierley.

himself to teach others incurs a special responsibility. Since we all make mistakes, we may mislead those who listen to us; and, if God has not called us to teach, why run the risk? What James has in mind is the Jews' overestimate of their competence to be the religious instructors of others. It is not a characteristic fault of English laymen; but there are two classes who are tempted to it. There are those who have little idea of the seriousness of religion, or of the necessity of knowledge if they are to have the right to an opinion about it. They find religion an interesting subject of discussion, and express freely, and sometimes arrogantly, any ideas that may have occurred to them, without recognizing that their responsibility is any greater than if they were speaking about art or poetry. There are those, again, who, like the Jews of old, have strong convictions about almost every question of duty or of religion. They do not feel that, in giving expression to these, they run any risk of error. Thus the moment that anything is said with which they do not entirely agree, their tongues, as James says, are 'restless' and fall forthwith to instruction. Now, this class of people would do well to ponder James's words. There is a time to give instruction, but to give it involves responsibility. Are we prepared to accept that responsibility? Let us remember that the word 'certainty' has two meanings. It is used to describe a subjective state of mind and it is used to describe an objective truth. Hence confusion sometimes arises. We suppose that because subjectively we are certain of a thing, the thing itself is objectively certain, and that is far from being the case.

¶ In her bitter essay on *Worldliness and Other-worldliness,* George Eliot points out how slight a fund of real knowledge is necessary for the equipment of a popular preacher. The lust of speech is a very subtle kind of egotism, for Talkative always greatly prefers to hear himself talking than to listen with attention to anybody else. . . . In the present age, when so large a multitude of people who do not read books have extracts and scraps, reviews and criticisms of books served out to them, nothing is easier than to acquire just such a superficial acquaintance with a vast mass of information as will enable them to talk freely about what they do not know. Here is the mirror for such talkers. Talkative has no system of thought. He has no capacity for it in that slight and restless mind of his. Consequently he is easily made to contradict himself, though he cannot be made to see that he has done so.

But his slightness is a more serious matter than that of superficial intelligence and discursive information. When he speaks of 'learning by talk to suffer,' we begin to know him for what he is. A man might as well speak of the art of prayer, or the preparation by talk for death. What this man wants is experience, by which, and not by talk, all that is best worth learning must be learned. This is a man, not of practice but of theory; and the religion of Christ is a religion of actual repentance and forgiveness, of actual dealing with life and with God. Talkative's religion is a hopelessly cheap religion, and the Christianity of Christ is always costly, though it is also in another sense without money and without price. Every one of those who in Bunyan's day would have been called 'exercised Christian men' will say that 'with a great price obtained I this freedom.' We shall presently see that Talkative was a hypocrite, and that the words of Burke are true of him: 'Those who quit their proper character to assume what does not belong to them are for the greater part ignorant both of the character they have and of the character they assume.'[1]

2. But James has a far greater evil in view than this. Bitterness and cruelty in speech do far more harm than ill-founded self-confidence. There is to-day less bitterness and injustice in religious controversy than there once was. The words of F. W. Robertson, in his celebrated sermon on the tongue, seem to us to-day somewhat overstrained, when he deals with this bitterness. But the evil is far from having altogether passed away. Still

[1] J. Kelman, *The Road*, i. 186.

'the tongue is a fire,' a 'world of iniquity among our members.' Still it is unhappily true that we use the same member to 'bless the Lord and Father,' and to curse men who are made after His likeness. Still it is only too possible to 'have bitter jealousy and faction' in our hearts, and so to 'glory and lie against the truth.' James's words go deep.

In the first place, everything, as our Lord taught us, must be considered in relation to God its Creator, and honoured accordingly. Especially is this true of our fellow-men. We must 'honour all men,' in our speech about them, as in other ways. The language of menace and of insult can never be in place. Secondly, jealousy and faction are always fruitful in illusion and falsehood. The man full of party-feeling can never see either his friends or his opponents as they really are. He glories quite unreasonably in the virtues and talents of those who agree with him, and underrates and misrepresents those who do not. Here, too, the tongue is restless, and here it is often full of deadly poison. It is the power of hell at work. What inspires our bitter and cruel speeches is not love of truth; it is the fact that we ourselves are identified with the view that we take of truth. Our own pride and ambition have far more to do with our injustice than any higher considerations. Moreover, as we give way to bitterness of speech the evil gains a stronger hold over us; our own injustice in speech inflames us, and we proceed to unjust action. Thus we stimulate a corresponding injustice to others, and the evil is extended more and more widely.

James reminds us of two things which should check us in our bitter speaking. The first is that, in condemning one another upon such uncertain grounds, we venture to condemn the Divine law which refuses us permission to do so. The second is that, in passing a sentence which we have no power to execute, we are guilty of an absurdity. 'Speak not one against another, brethren. He that speaketh against a brother, or judgeth his brother, speaketh against the law, and judgeth the law. . . . One only is the lawgiver and judge, even he who is able to save and to destroy; but who art thou that judgest thy neighbour?'

¶ Listen to an hour of conversation in any Christian company. How much of it turns, almost of necessity as it would seem, on the actions and characters of others! The meaning of judging others appears to be this: the judgment seat of Our Divine Lord is, as it were, already set up on the earth. But it is empty. It is waiting for Him. We meanwhile, unmannerly and unbidden, keep ascending the steps, enthroning ourselves upon His seat, and anticipating and mimicking His judgment of our brethren. To put it in this way brings home to us the wretchedness of what we are doing. It will also surely assist us in endeavouring to cleanse our conversation of so much unnecessary canvassing of the motives and actions of others. Yet, for the most part, we have gone far along our road in devotion, and done ourselves many an irreparable mischief, before we bestow half the carefulness on the government of our own tongue which it not only deserves, but imperiously requires.[1]

3. There is one other misuse of the tongue which James mentions, and that is grumbling. Let us translate his words quite literally: 'Groan not brethren, one against another, that ye be not judged: behold, the Judge standeth before the doors.' The words are admirably chosen. We do not groan at large; if we groan, we groan against somebody; pessimism is always accompanied by the condemnation of other people. If we are depressed as to the outlook either in the world or in the Church, we look out for scapegoats and we generally find them in our rulers. Why do they not do this—or that? Many to-day are depressed about the Church. It has become a habit—and a pose—to stand in a white sheet. Well! humility and penitence are good, if they are sincere. But we must be careful that we place the white sheet round our own shoulders; sometimes we adjust it very carefully round the shoulders of others. The warning of James is here most valuable.

[1] *The Spirit of Father Faber*, 82.

At all our doors the Judge is standing. He is very competent; we had better leave condemnation in His hands. Pessimism always leads to apathy, idleness, and self-indulgence—the very things that have brought about the evils which depress us. And pessimistic speech is 'full of deadly poison' to ourselves and others; the more we use it, the more we become the people who have least right to use it.

Lift a cry
Against this work-day world, this ill-spread feast,
As if ourselves were better certainly
Than what we came to. Maker and High Priest,
I ask Thee not my joys to multiply—
Only to make me worthier of the least.

Yes, it is a work-day world; there is neither time nor justification for grumbling. Especially let us avoid, both in the Church and in the State, a foolish condemnation of our rulers, which takes no account of their difficulties. 'It is the duty of the newspapers,' says Bishop Creighton, 'to tell us what to do: it is our duty not to do it. If things were as simple as our critics make them out, we would have done what they advise long ago.'

What is the remedy? Not the suppression of speech, but the right use of it, the use of the 'best member' that we have to glorify God. 'Therewith bless we the Lord and Father.' That is the 'sweet water' for which our tongues were made. 'Salt water' cannot 'yield sweet,' though we may try to justify it on the ground that it will. 'The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God,' and bitter speech is never productive of reform. It is when the praises of God are in our mouth that the two-edged sword is in our hands. The instruction of others, censure, and grumbling can all be overdone, but not worship, praise, or thanksgiving. The habit of worship is the cure for all sins of the tongue. Count up your blessings, personal, national, and ecclesiastical, and give thanks for them. Practise God-examination, and praise Him for what He is.

Lift up your hearts! We lift them, Lord, to Thee;
And at Thy feet none other may we see;
Lift up your hearts! E'en so, with one accord,
We lift them up, we lift them to the Lord.

Above the level of the former years,
The mire of sin, the slough of guilty fears,
The mist of doubt, the blight of love's decay,
O Lord of Light, lift all our hearts to-day.

Then, if we must, as we return, see both others and ourselves, we shall see them in the light of God. He holds the future in His hands, and if He is confident surely we can be so.[1]

The Tongue.

Ja. iii. 6.—'The tongue is a fire.'

Almost everybody has some theme on which he can wax eloquent; nearly everybody has some favourite subject on which he can find words and to spare. Moreover, there is nothing so characteristic of a man as the topic on which he will let himself go, for naturally that is the topic that has been most in his mind. One person will discourse about art, another about athletics, a third about agriculture, and that with rapture, and on the slightest provocation. In each case he has given us his own measure—we know what manner of man he is as soon as we know what manner of thoughts he dwells among. Now, what is the one theme on which James can express himself with the ease and fluency that come from long thinking upon it? The thing is a paradox; James, of all people, gets eloquent about eloquence of all things; this man, whose style is ordinarily as plain as a Quaker's meeting-house, suddenly launches out into all the rich, fantastic ornamentation of a Gothic building in setting forth the power of the tongue.

How shall we explain it? Quite simply: he can talk best on the subject that has supplied him with most food for reflection. In

[1] H. L. Goudge, *Thoughts for Dark Days*, 63ff.

dealing with men and affairs these many years past he has been impressed and astounded over and over again by the power wielded by that 'small member,' as he calls it—the more impressed because this was just the power in which he himself was most deficient, as he knew to his cost. He found that out in his contest with Paul, when the latter visited Jerusalem, arguing, disputing, carrying his points by sheer force of persuasiveness, bearing down opposition with speech that flowed like molten lava; he had known that hopeless feeling with which the man on the losing side tells himself, 'What's the use? *This other man can speak!*' On other occasions, again, he had encountered—and the recollection gives him brain-weariness—the arid subtleties of the scribes and rabbis, with their unreal distinctions and legal fictions—'Whosoever shall swear by the temple, it is nothing; but whosoever shall swear by the gold of the temple, he is a debtor,' and so on—and he had despised these trickeries as downright, wholesome men have despised the like in all ages. And what a lot of shallow talkers and vapid and insincere orators he had listened to in his time—men who always had to say something, whether they had anything to say or not! We can imagine how a practical nature like his sickened at their great swelling words, at their professions which never meant anything, most of all at their odious religious cant! And has not the tongue borne its terrible share in fanning discords, sowing ill-will, perverting the course of justice and making the worse appear the better reason? From his long experience he can call up any number of cases in point; yea, has not the faith itself suffered grievous harm through reckless and random statements such as could only give the enemy occasion to blaspheme?

1. If, as James says, the tongue, being but a little member, boasteth great things, we might ask in reply, Has it not whereof to boast?

What a wonderful faculty speech is! It makes human society possible. Apart from words—visible or audible signs expressing inward thought and feeling—the inner life of every man would be an island surrounded by an impassable ocean. There could be no commerce, no politics, no church. One great school of philosophy has maintained that apart from language—definite signs for ideas—there could be no thought even. How wonderful again is this faculty of speech! The words of a mother to her child, of a child to a mother—the words of lovers—the words of friends—the words of dying men—how these remain in the memory of those to whom they were spoken, a light, a joy, a power through all succeeding years. What palaces of beauty the poets have built for us with words! What treasures of wisdom the wise of all countries and of all ages have laid up for us in words! The words of great political orators have changed the temper and the thought of nations, have provoked war, have compelled peace. The words of great preachers have shaken the hearts of men with fear, inspired them with immortal hope, made real the invisible and eternal Kingdom of God. The words of prophets, of apostles, have wrought miracles in the moral life of men, in many centuries, in many lands. The words of Christ!—the accent of God is in them, and we listen with wonder and awe and immeasurable joy. And to describe the eternal glory of Christ Himself, we speak of Him as the *Word* of God.

¶ Has not the speaker for God accomplished more than the leader of armies? Has not eloquence consecrated to the cause of humanity won greater victories than ever were ushered in by the crash of cannon? There are some speeches which we feel are events—there are lyrics to whose rhythms men have marched to destroy ancient and seemingly all-powerful wrongs. Here is that great historic conflict between North and South, with slavery for its issue—and here is a woman inspired by God to sing just one song, 'that Battle Hymn of the Republic, which uttered the heart of Northern America during the crisis,' and nerved men to heroism and devotion:

> Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming
> of the Lord:

He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored;
He hath loosed the fatal lightning of His terrible swift sword:
His truth is marching on. . . .

In the beauty of the lilies Christ was born, across the sea,
With a glory in His bosom that transfigures you and me:
As He died to make men holy, let us die to make men free,
While God is marching on.

Julia Ward Howe died full of years and honour, but her lines live, and will live. Thank God for the ministry of prophetic souls, the ministry of the Word and the power of the Word!

Here, again, is one poor monk, Savonarola, his sole coign of vantage his pulpit in St. Mark's, Florence, the solitary prophet of righteousness in a city whose corruption was appalling; yet because this one man was faithful in speaking the truth as he saw it, behold, an incredible change! This is the account of the effect of Savonarola's preaching, given by a sober historian, not a romancer:

'The aspect of the city was completely changed. The women threw aside their jewels and finery, dressed plainly, bore themselves demurely; licentious young Florentines were transformed as by magic into sober, religious men; pious hymns took the place of Lorenzo's carnival songs. Most wonderful of all, bankers and tradesmen were impelled by scruples of conscience to restore ill-gotten gains amounting to many thousand florins.' Voluntarily the people gave up their evil books and pictures, and on the last day of carnival these were all piled up in the great square, and burnt as a bonfire to the glory of God. Verily, the Word was with power, as it ever is on the lips of faithful men; as another great wielder of the same weapon, Heine, saw it in imagination, close upon the heel of the Word follows the Deed armed for the accomplishment of its appointed purpose.[1]

[1] J. Warschauer.

2. Surely a faculty capable of such glorious achievements should be most carefully guarded and trained, for the Latin proverb is right which says that the corruption of the best is ever the worst. If James expresses himself with such tremendous vehemence on sins of language, he feels perhaps as a wise man must do when he sees a young prodigal wasting the resources which might in other hands do untold good. There is always something painful in the spectacle of power running to waste: there is something still more painful about power misapplied. When James refers to the tongue as 'the world of iniquity among our members, which defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the wheel of nature,' we all know pretty well what he has in mind. It is, alas! too true that the same glorious faculty which is the prophet's instrument for unveiling the mystery of God, the patriot's and reformer's vehicle for imparting to others his enthusiasm, may also be debased to the vilest uses, for the purpose of inflaming the lowest passions, dethroning the angel and liberating the brute in man. That is a subject too painful to linger over; we all know that the evil exists—we all must do what we can to discourage it in every possible way, to keep speech scrupulously clean—if necessary to express our distaste for its contrary in unmistakable terms. If every Christian youth in business or office would make it clear that he would not tolerate as his friend or companion anyone who offended in this manner, he might be subjected to a measure of sneering and persecution at first, but presently a mighty change would be effected. If evil is so frank and unashamed, it is because Christians are such cowards.

¶ Man to man, let me protest that masculine intercourse is as much under the code of honour and innocence as any other. Talk which brings before the mind a region of life properly veiled as too delicate for common observation is calculated to foster a morbid taste, leave images of evil on the imagination, and whet low proclivities which lie at the animal base of almost every man's nature. Even when there is nothing odious hinted at

nor any thought of working mischief, the atmosphere of such a region is unwholesome. Men often breed untold harm without realizing what they are doing, especially when others more innocent-hearted or less experienced and settled in virtue are present.

Where did Robert Burns learn the things which demoralized him? Just, I fear, where so many country-bred youths acquire their unhallowed knowledge—in the farm-kitchens, 'bothies,' and barns, and the evening 'howffs' of men. What is responsible for putting evil into the mind of many a spirited, sociable youth—what, in many an instance, but the 'risky' talk of men when together? What numbers receive an evil infection from those who carelessly toy with light references to the shady regions of human life! What devilish fires have been lit in combustible natures by men's suggestive talk! Things which had been held back out of sight by a strong barricade of resolute repression have, when playfully treated in their hearing, over-swept the barrier and carried the weak or innocent away. And, after all, these were perhaps said only to sharpen a witticism or give a story enough piquant seasoning to bring the tribute of a chuckling laugh, or—it is a Scripture phrase—make 'the naughty wink with the eye.' Yet some one present may never get the taste of that seasoning out of his mouth.

Kipling—and he is the writer who reflects the men's world—lends us the words that come home here:

Their sin it was that fed the fire—small blame to them that heard—
The 'bhoys' get drunk on rhetoric, and madden at a word.
If words are words, or death is death, or powder sends the ball,
You spoke the words that sped the shot—the curse be on you all![1]

3. And then, James has not observed human nature, he has not come into contact with all sorts and conditions of men, for such a length of time without seeing a full share of the sheer havoc wrought by the commonest of all sins of the tongue—words that rend and tear, sting and provoke; words that are spoken in haste and may be repented at leisure. There is a homely wisdom in Carleton's lines:

Boys flying kites haul in their white-winged birds;
You can't do that way when you're flying words,
'Careful with fire,' is good advice we know
'Careful with words' is ten times doubly so.
Thoughts unexprest may sometimes fall back dead,
But God Himself can't kill them when they're said.

'Behold, how much wood is kindled by how small a fire!' Or, as the Apostle might have said, had he lived in a later day, 'Behold what a terrific explosion may be caused by a mere unguarded spark!' What sheer disaster has been let loose by a want of self-restraint at a critical moment.

¶ In the days of the Home Rule debate, with inflammable material piled sky-high, a Nationalist Member calls out the word 'Judas!' across the floor of the House, and in a moment the Mother of Parliaments is disgraced by a free fight such as might occur on a Saturday night in an alehouse of the lower sort! And a slip of the tongue on the part of the French Premier gave the signal for the worst scene of disorder witnessed within living memory in the Chamber of Deputies! Yes, we know; everyone can think of utterances of his own he would have recalled the moment after, had it been possible—and the wise man is he who will humbly admit with the Apostle that 'in many things we all stumble; if any stumbleth not in speech, the same is a perfect man'—and we are none of us perfect just yet![1]

[1] R. E. Welsh, *Man to Man*, 10.

[1] J. Warschauer.

Sins of the Tongue.

Ja. iii. 6.—'The tongue is a fire.'

In no work of the human mind do we find so terse and truthful a description of the character and power of the human tongue as in the Epistle of James. In this chapter is found the most graphic outlines of what the tongue is, has been, can be, and ought to be; and, by a series of most striking statements and illustrations, the Apostle sets forth the tongue in its qualities of good or bad; warning us against the bad, urging us to cultivate the good. In doing this he uses three illustrations.

First, he compares it to 'bits' in horses' mouths. The horse is more powerful than several men; yet by putting a small bit into his mouth, a little child can guide him, and turn about his whole huge body. As the bit is small in comparison with the size of the horse, and yet controls the horse, so the tongue is small in comparison with the whole body, and yet it is the controlling member of that body.

Secondly, James compares it to 'the helm' of a ship. The largest vessels, in the fiercest gales, and on the most boisterous seas, are steered by a small rudder—a little and almost insignificant piece of wood in comparison with the monster ship which it controls. Yet, small as it is, by it the helmsman steers the rolling and toppling vessel, and guides it through storm and billows to the haven where he would be. So the tongue, little, and like the rudder kept almost always out of sight, yet controls the whole body. The tongue is to the life of man what the helm is to the ship. It is the rudder which steers all his movements and guides him into the port of peace or into the pit of woe.

Thirdly, James compares the power of the tongue to 'a fire.' 'Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth:' and 'the tongue is a fire.' A spark lighting on the dry wood of a forest may cause one branch of a tree to take fire; it may spread to the trunk; it may catch the next tree, and thus progress until the whole forest shall be burned by one little spark. So a sparklike word dropped from a tongue burning with anger or with zeal may fall into a family, a community, a town, a church, a whole country, and set them in a blaze of consuming, burning rage.

With regard to the tongue under the figure of a fire, James goes on to say that 'it setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell.' These are strong words. What do they mean?

The word 'course' is, in the original, 'wheel' or 'circle' of nature, and may mean the generations of men succeeding each other with the rapidity of the revolutions of a wheel; or the course of a man's life; or the circle of human affairs. Each of these ideas might have been in the mind of the Apostle, because the tongue does set on fire a whole generation of men; does ignite the whole course of a man's life; and does make the circle of social life to blaze under its fiery appliances.

Let us look at some of the sins of the tongue. To enumerate all would be impossible; for they ramify into every department of public and private life, and cover the entire face of the world. There are several, however, which the Bible brings prominently before us, and to these we must confine ourselves at this time.

1. *Tattling.*—Paul speaks of tattlers, and calls them 'busybodies,' who out of idleness roam about retailing from house to house the talk which they have heard. The tattler is never so happy as when talking. He must speak, it matters little what he says; and hence he rattles away, telling anything and everything that comes into his mind. His conversation is, as Bishop Butler says, 'merely an exercise of the tongue; no other human faculty has any share in it.' There is a process in chemistry by which you can arrest the invisible gas, and weigh it, and separate it into its constituent elements; and were there moral reagents by which we could arrest the gaseous tattle of these busybodies and resolve it into its elements, its constituent parts would be folly, slander, falsehood, flattery, and

boastfulness. What a source of domestic and social misery is found in the tongue of the talebearer. He indeed 'scattereth firebrands, arrows, and death,' and saith, 'Am not I in sport?' It has been well said by an English writer that 'the author of an evil insinuation or slander does not usually carry it about himself; but he ties it to a few idle vagabonds; just as Samson tied firebrands to the tails of the three hundred foxes and turned them into the standing corn of the Philistines.' These tattlers, with their fire-kindling tongues, do indeed set on flame a whole town, a community. It is impossible to estimate the evils of this unrestrained volubility, this wanton talking of an unbridled tongue. Such a tongue is indeed set on fire of hell.

She cheered each dry committee,
  With tales of absent folk,
And let not truth nor pity,
  Impair her little joke.
Till loves were soiled, and lives were spoiled
  By every word she spoke.

2. *Slander.*—Twice does the Apostle, speaking of false accusers, term them *Diaboloi;* and the meaning of the word *Diaboloi* is slanderous, libellous, injurious. This is the term constantly applied to the devil, because he is, as John styles him, 'the accuser of our brethren.' The devil, then, is, as Christ says, 'the Father of lies'; and everyone who gives his tongue to slander and maligns his neighbours, or utters words of falsehood or detraction, comes into the class of those false accusers, those *Diaboloi* of whom Jesus truly said, 'Ye are of your father the devil.' There are various ways in which slander is uttered, each of which finds its illustration, and each its condemnation, in Scripture.

(1) The grossest kind of slander is bearing false witness: that is, saying a person did things which he did not do; as was the case with those suborned to testify against Naboth, whose vineyard Ahab coveted; as was the case with the false witness who laid to David's charge things which he knew not of. This false witness is sometimes spoken openly, sometimes in secret, but always with malicious intent; and in every instance the tongue which utters it not only sets on fire the course of nature, but is set on fire of hell.

(2) Another way of slandering is by the use of scandalous and opprobrious epithets; as when Korah accused Moses of being unjust and ambitious; as when the Pharisees called our Lord a gluttonous man. Every epithet which you apply to a man is designed to brand his character, and render it odious in the sight of others; and this is mostly done behind a man's back, where for a long time, perhaps, he can not hear of it, and where, it may be, he can never defend himself or clear himself of the slander. Such a tongue is indeed like a viper's, lurking in secret, and suddenly shooting out its fatal venom.

No might nor greatness in mortality
Can censure 'scape; back-wounding calumny
The whitest virtue strikes; what king so strong
Can tie the gall up in the slanderous tongue?

(3) Another way of slandering is to impute false motives to good actions—as when we say of a liberal man that he is vainglorious; of an active man in church affairs that he is a Diotrephes; of a devout man that he is hypocritical; ascribing to the actions of persons not good motives and designs, but evil ones, wherever it is possible to imagine them.

¶ One of our class looked in to see him one day, and heard from him something about another member of the class. The next time the visitor called, the sick man said, 'Oh, William, I wanted to see you. I was so sorry that I told you about . . . last time. 'But,' the visitor said, 'it was quite true.' 'Ah!' said the dying man, 'perhaps it was true, but I am afraid I told you of it because I liked to.' The teacher's comment is that to him this little incident had been more instructive than all the advice he had heard so frequently as to the duty of avoiding 'talebearing and detraction.'[1]

3. *Falsehood.*—The lie positive, and the lie

[1] S. E. Robson, *Joshua Rowntree*, 162.

negative; the lie direct, and the lie by implication; the lie malignant and the lie sportive—every designed departure from truth is falsehood; and every falsehood is a sin against one's soul, a sin against your fellow-men, and a sin against God, which He will punish with fearful severity. Should you attempt to sift the conversation which you hear in the common intercourse of life, you would be surprised to find how much of falsehood it contains. Not the glaring, naked lie, bold, impudent, heaven-defying; but prevarication, distortion of facts, suppression of truth, or some one of the many minor forms which the tongue employs in uttering lies before God.

¶ There are many people, claiming to be very religious people, who are very willing to repeat a story to the prejudice of some one they know; though they have very little reason to think it true, and have strong suspicions that it is false. There is a lesser number of respectable people who will positively invent and retail a story to the prejudice of some one they know, being well aware that it is false. In short, most people who repeat ill-natured stories may be arranged in these two classes:

1. People who lie.
2. People who lie, and know they lie.[1]

4. *Sarcasm.*—A sharp and biting tongue is a dangerous instrument; they are not wise who play with it. Keen and bitter words, albeit they are deserved, often rankle in the memory long after they are uttered. They hurt harder than blows and are harder to forget. Reproof may often be necessary, but a reproof, even a stern one, need not be a scornful and biting one. The arrows of sarcasm are barbed with contempt; that is what makes them rankle so; and contempt is a feeling that a good man cannot afford to indulge. Resentment, indignation, wrath, are sometimes holy feelings; but contempt for any creature God has made is not a feeling to be cherished. Human beings may sometimes behave themselves in such a way that it is hard for us to keep the feeling down; but that is our business, to keep it down; no word ought ever to give it utterance. And sarcasm is the utterance of it. It is the sneer in the satire or the ridicule that galls and wounds.

¶ There is a persecution sharper than that of the axe. There is an iron that goes into the heart deeper than the knife. Cruel sneers, and sarcasms, and pitiless judgments, and cold-hearted calumnies—these are persecution. There is the tyrant of the nursery, and the playground, and the domestic circle, as well as of the judgment-hall. 'Better were it,' said the Redeemer, 'for that man if a millstone had been hung about his neck.' Did you ever do that? Did you ever pour bitterness into a heart that God was training, by a cold laugh, or a sneer, or a galling suspicion?—Into a sister's heart, or a friend's, or even a stranger's? Remember, when you sent them, as Job's friends sent him, to pour out their griefs before their Father, your name went up to the Avenger's ears, mingled with the cries of His own elect.[1]

5. *Profanity.*—How many are the epithets and phrases circulating from mouth to mouth, even among good people, which, when reduced to the last analysis, are, in God's sight, a taking of His name in vain! How many ejaculations bordering on profanity, how many exclamations having the aspect of thinly-disguised blasphemies, are current in society. These tend to weaken conscience—are almost self-conscious violations of the third commandment, and always detract from integrity of character, by showing inward thoughts and emotions that would utter themselves in profanity if they dared, and are kept back and masked only by social considerations rather than reverence for God's hallowed name.

¶ An old writer describes the devil as a fisherman, baiting his hook with pleasures in other temptations, but catching them without any bait in swearing. . . . Todd, with happier sententiousness than is usual in his *Students' Manual*, says of it, 'If you wish to fit yourself

[1] A. K. H. Boyd, *Autumn Holidays of a Country Parson*, 280.

[1] F. W. Robertson.

for the dark world, it will be time enough to learn its language after you have prepared for it by more decent sins.' A great deal of profanity is neither more nor less than bad taste. An empty mind, a limited vocabulary, and a vulgar delight in strength of language are all that lie behind the most appalling words—'He knew not what to say, and so he swore.'[1]

¶ We are not astonished as much as we are disquieted and distressed at the answer given by a little child when asked by a magistrate, 'What do you know about God?' 'Please, sir, that's the name father, when he is drunk, always swears by.'[2]

¶ The story is told of an ignorant but godly man who came in the ancient days when the Bible was not in the hands of the people, to one of the fathers of the church, desiring to be taught the Scriptures. His first lesson was the thirty-ninth Psalm beginning thus: 'I said I will take heed to my ways that I sin not with my tongue.' He went away and did not return for his second lesson. Many years passed before his teacher saw him; and when they met the preceptor asked the pupil, 'How was it that you never came back for further instruction in the word of God?' 'Because,' was the answer, 'though I have been trying hard, I have not yet learned to keep the first verse that you taught me.' He had found the taming of the tongue to be a task as difficult as James reports it to be.[3]

Inconsistency.

Ja. iii. 11.—'Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter?'

James was thinking, perhaps, when he wrote the words of the text, of the remarkable fountains that sprang up near each other out of the earth, and flowed into the creek or inlet near Capernaum where Jesus taught the people from the boat, and James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, were mending their nets when they were called to be His disciples. They furnished him with a most felicitous image. 'Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter?' Here were several streams flowing into one, but they did not differ in the quality of their waters. Some were not fresh and cool, and others tepid and brackish. They were all brackish and tepid, because they all arose out of the same rocky stratum and passed through the same volcanic soil. They were only different streams of the same fountain; and the same fountain could not, in the nature of things, at the same place send forth sweet water and bitter. No fountain can yield salt water and fresh.

It is of the mouth or the tongue that the Apostle is speaking. He seems himself to be a man of few words, slow to speak and, whatever may be the reason, peculiarly sensitive to the guilt of sins of the tongue, making the bridling of a man's tongue the great test of his religion. He says most emphatically of a common experience that out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing, 'these things ought not to be.' It is an unnatural condition. You you do not find in Nature such contrarieties and inconsistencies. Nature is harmonious. Like causes always produce like results. The thistle does not produce figs but thistledown; and thorns do not produce grapes but sour sloes and crude bramble-berries. The fountain of sweet water pours forth always fresh water, and all the streams that flow from it are sweet and fresh. The fountain, on the other hand, that is salt and brackish supplies its streams with the same bitter ingredients, and you can trace them all along their course. All Nature is under fixed and immovable law and you can depend upon the harvest being like the seed sown.

But man is unnatural when he breaks away from the law of his God. He does things that are inconsistent with Nature, and contrary to his own being and well-being; and there is, consequently, a want of harmony between him and his surroundings. There is a law in his members warring against the law of his mind, bringing him into bondage to his lower nature;

[1] J. Kelman, *The Road*, ii. 133.
[2] F. Pigou, *Odds and Ends*, 176.
[3] W. Gladden, *Things New and Old*, 97.

and this strife within he carries into the world without. He is not at one with himself, and he cannot be at one with the creation around him. Destitute of unity, he says and does the most inconsistent and contradictory things. He is double-tongued like the serpent, and therefore out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. The bifurcation is carried out in all his actions. He is double-eyed, having an eye to his own things most of all, even while he professes to have a single eye for the glory of God and the good of others.

And how cruel is such inconsistency! It destroys our faith not only in the goodness of human nature, but also in the reality of the work of Divine grace. We cannot do our fellow creature a greater injury than this. The world is false enough to him at all times; but if in the place of religion, where he expected to find only things that are pure and honest, and lovely, and of good report, he met with falsehood and dishonesty, and selfishness, and everything that was base and mean, how grievous would be the disappointment! Everything in existence would taste bitter afterwards. The Israelites sank into a state of despair when they came to the fountain of Marah and found its waters undrinkable. Their parched tongues clove to the roof of their mouths; and their torment was only aggravated by the sight of water that sparkled clear as crystal, but on account of its nauseous qualities was worse than useless. And, reasoning from analogy, how terrible is the revulsion of feeling we experience when a friend in whom we have trusted as a follower of the Lord Jesus has proved, by his evil speaking, a well of bitterness instead of a well of comfort. It is enough to make us disbelieve Divine goodness and human truthfulness; enough to harden our heart against God and man. Sins of the tongue are indeed more numerous and deadly than any other sins. They cause more misery than all other sins put together—a misery that is entirely gratuitous and useless. We do not wonder that the Apostle James should break out into such vehement language in condemning the vice; or that the Psalmist should pray so earnestly to be hidden in the calm, secret place of the Most High from the strife of tongues.

On the other hand, there is no medicine so healing amid the troubles of this world as the medicine of a tongue attuned to the praise of God and the love of man. We are told of Him who spake as never man spake, and who had grace poured into His lips, that, in the case of men full of disease, He healed them with His *word*. And so, by the word of sympathy and love, we, too, can perform miracles of healing in a world sorely vexed and afflicted by man's perversity.

¶ In Palestine I longed for the water that came pure and sparkling from the primitive rocks of my own country. The finest sight in all our northern land is a well bubbling up on the shoulder of a high mountain. The clouds of heaven distil their dew directly into it, and the granite basin, lined with the softest moss, holds the dimpled waters with immaculate purity. No stain of earth, no taint of rock, nothing but the transparent mountain air mingles with it, causing it to sparkle and murmur. It is pure as crystal and cold as ice. You stoop down in the hot noon, and drink long draughts of bliss from its cup. It puts new strength and vigour into your wearied and sun-scorched frame; and you pursue your journey with fresh zest and interest. Such in all cases should be the fountain of Christian speech. It should come from a heart which God's grace has made pure, filled with the charity which thinketh no evil. It should communicate in its purity what it has received from heaven. We should be cheered and helped by the conversation of our fellow-Christians. Out of the mouths of those who profess to love the Lord Jesus and who sing the praise of God should proceed not idle or ill-natured gossip, not cynical or malicious criticism, not back-biting and slanderous depreciation, but kindly, generous words, which never judge harshly, but always put the best construction upon everything—guileless, simple-hearted words which never leave room for suspecting a hidden purpose. Such a pure fountain of speech is, more than anything else which this world can give, a help to a

Christian life. We drink from it and are strengthened and cheered, and go on our way rejoicing.[1]

Death in the power of the tongue. In the slandering word, in the lie,
In false witness, in flattering speech, in deceiving reply
Death doth lie.

Life in the power of the tongue. In the news of God's gift of His love
To the world, in bestowing His Son to reclaim and to draw us above—
Wondrous love.

Life and Death in our power. Say shall not the choice be for life?
Of words that may help and uplift, and give strength in the strife—
Words of Life![2]

Envy.

Ja. iii. 16.—'Where envying and strife is.'

In Milton's *Comus* we read of a certain potion which has the power to pervert the senses of everyone who drinks it. Nothing is apprehended truly. Sight and hearing and taste are all disordered, and the victim is quite unconscious of the confusion. The deadly draught is the minister of deceptive chaos.

Envy is like that potion. When it is drunk by the spirit it perverts every moral and spiritual sense. The envious is more fatally stricken than the blind. He gazes upon untruth and thinks it true. He looks upon confusion and thinks it order. Envy is colour-blind. It is like jealousy, of which it is a blood relation. It never sees anything in its natural hues. It misinterprets everything.

How are we to rid ourselves of envy?

1. We must, first of all, cultivate a sense of proportion, and avoid setting an undue value upon the things of life. Everything can be valued according to its use, and nothing is useful that does not promote our own or another's good, or God's glory. If, therefore, we are endowed with such worldly goods as are requisite for our needs, we have all that is intended for us and all that we should desire. If we will only be content with the happiness that Nature designed for us, our happiness will be easy to attain; but if we spend our time in seeking the happiness which we think we ought to have, we will not only seek in vain but lose that with which we are already blessed. There is nothing in this to prevent our lawful desire to 'get on in the world.' Every man is endowed with certain abilities, and, provided he uses them to his own good and the benefit of others, there is nothing to prevent him making his name honoured throughout the world and taking all the success that life offers him. He does this, not because he is dissatisfied, but because he realizes that his abilities were given him to use, and because he can see, or imagines he can see, the position to which he is destined. To increase our fortune in order to enlarge our sphere of doing good is a worthy desire in which envy plays no part.

¶ When, however, one turns to those great lives which have been the glory of the Christian movement, it is plain that they are handling ambition in another way altogether. William Booth, founder of the Salvation Army, was a man whose figure looms the larger the longer we know it, as mountains look greater when we retreat from them. But his own phrasing of the motive power which drove him down into the slums of Darkest England to work for folk whom everybody else had forgotten was this: 'the impulses and urgings of an undying ambition' to save souls. Ambition is not something to be cast out; it is to be lifted and expanded, oriented around new aims, and devoted to great purposes.

The greatest saints are always made of the same material as the greatest sinners. Ignatius Loyola, the dashing, gallant, adventurous cavalier, becomes Ignatius Loyola, the fearless, ambitious, militant reformer, with all the endowments of his old life reorganized around Christian purposes in the new. He threw

[1] H. Macmillan, *Gleanings in Holy Fields*, 79ff.
[2] B. M. Wills.

none of his equipment away. He kept it all and used it.

For we can employ powers like ambition in many different ways. A man may be ambitious to conquer a neighbouring chief and steal his wives, or he may be ambitious to make a city neighbourhood through his settlement house a more decent place in which to live. A man may be ambitious to be the richest man in the county, or he may be ambitious to make his business a blessing to every man who works for him and a public service to every customer who buys from him. A man may be ambitious to be saluted as Rabbi in the marketplace, or he may be ambitious to lay his life, like the prophet's, on the lives of those whom he teaches and breathe into them the breath of life.

When Mackay, the missionary, reached Uganda in Africa, the difference between him and the natives was not that he lacked ambition and they had it. He had more ambition than all of them put together or else he would not have been there—ambition to make Uganda one more province in the Kingdom of Christ. These primitive instincts are too valuable to throw away. They are meant to be developed, reorganized and rededicated, and the degree to which that has been achieved is one of the primary tests of character. The ideal man, as Jacob Boehme said, has all his fiery energies harnessed to the service of the light.[1]

2. Let us convince ourselves, too, of the providence of God; that it is He who rules the universe and determines the distribution of mankind. We are His servants, and what we have we are accountable for. If we have wealth in this world, we have so much more to account for in the next; the ownership of these things does not lie with us, but only the stewardship.

Why should we envy a man his ill-gotten wealth or his honours purchased at the expense of his conscience? Were we in the possession of either of these we might lose our souls. It is not every good man who is suited to a position of wealth and influence. If we have any faith in God, then why cannot we leave the allocation of these things to Him, and stop squabbling about them amongst ourselves. A man is either righteous or sinful. If he professes his love for Christ, then let him take his eyes off the glittering coronets of the nobility, the ease of the wealthy, and give his soul, first and last, to God; or else betake himself where he will not pollute His holy ground. Religion is a reality, not a convenience.

¶ In every aspect of this matter of property and industry the word *trust* will represent the primary idea of the Christian cavalier. Believing that all his goods are committed to his keeping by a wise and generous Master, he will see himself as a servant, permitted to hold for a time what cannot, except in metaphor, be spoken of as his own, the tenant of a leasehold of which the proprietary rights are permanently vested in a supreme directive Power.

Those mills and factories that belch their smoke into the clouded air of heaven, those furnaces whose flames light up with iridescent glare the opaque glooms of the night, those dewy lawns that spread down to the river's edge, those copses where the blackbirds sing, and all the wide realm of furrowed field and lush pasture-lands, with the solid many-windowed house in which he gathers his children and friends around a generously laden board, are for him a sacred trust, committed to his care by One who has seen fit to bless, beyond his deserts or claims, the labour of his hands. Even though his property consist only of the jerkin that protects him from the pelting rain and the stout stick that helps him on the weary road, he will still believe that these also are entrusted to him for wise and frugal use.

And, further, Christ's disciple will know that there are times when, like Maroof in the *Arabian Nights*, though he be penniless, with little prospect of ever escaping from the bands of his poverty, he must yet have the word 'Abundance' frequently on his lips. Indigent to outward view, he carries in his bosom a wealth transcending dreams. Thirsty as a raft-borne sailor on bitter seas, he tastes the

[1] H. E. Fosdick, *Twelve Tests of Character*, 148.

flavour of vintages long ripened by the sun and slakes his throat with water from Castalian springs. For he knows that poverty and riches are in the last resort dependent on the soul, and having found his treasure there he can be in all things well content.

Yes, there is an opulence born of the grateful heart and contented mind. Those who have known most intimately the strait and narrow ways of Penury have often found them rich, far richer than those green savannahs and vine-clad hills through which the lucky ones take their way. This is the highest art, to make one's territories vaster within than without, and by a subtle alchemy to turn drear deserts into gardens of delight.[1]

3. Lastly, let us study closely the doctrine laid down for us by Christ Himself: the love of God, and the love of our neighbour. Since every man is, in the eyes of God, our brother, let us treat him as such. Christ said that this was the distinguishing mark of a true disciple, and if we had it in our heart to love God and all mankind, what numerous other virtues must we possess. We should not then be open to the danger of self-love, the source from which our envy comes. A man eaten up by an inordinate love of himself can have little time to spare for the thought of others. He attempts nothing for their good; cares nothing for the evils that befall them, and grows jealous at the first sign of their success.

Do we sometimes think that it is only right that our merit should be recognized, our success assured; that we are so superior to those around us that the chief power and dignity are ours by right? Is this the cause of our wrath and our envy? If so, let us again think of Christ, of His great meekness in the midst of His power; a power and a right which He knew to be His, but did not exercise, because it was not that way that the world would be saved. It was for the good of others that He thought, lived, and died. Let us be His followers in this also.[2]

[1] A. C. Hill, *The Sword of the Lord*, 247.
[2] H. St. John, *The Reasonableness of Christianity*, 25ff.

Wisdom.

Ja. iii. 17.—'The wisdom that is from above.'

Wisdom—in the sense in which it is used by James, and indeed in the Scriptures generally—is something wholly distinguishable from mere knowledge. A man who has spent his entire life in mastering many provinces of learning, or who is familiar with some of the great realms of science, may have no wisdom, and a peasant who can barely read may be a wise man. The wise man has discovered the actual truth about the world and the order of human life. He has seen, and he never forgets, God's invisible and eternal kingdom by which he is environed. He knows that for him and for all men the will of God is supreme. He has, therefore, the power and habit of forming a just judgment on wealth and poverty, joy and sorrow, ease and pain, public honour and public dishonour, and all the incidents of human experience. He has a clear vision of the laws that should regulate conduct, and of the principles that form character.

This is the wisdom of which James gives an account.

1. It is first *pure*—a word which, as Bishop Westcott says, 'suggests the notion of shrinking from contamination, of a delicate sensibility to pollution of any kind.' Conscience, even in Christian men, is too often wanting in sensitiveness; they avoid the grosser sins, but have no fine and subtle sense to recognize sins of a less flagrant kind. They are constantly approaching too near the line that separates evil from good. They do not instinctively keep as far away from it as they can. They try to escape dark and ugly stains on their character; but they forget that the nations of the saved in the City of God walk in white raiment, and that even the dust of the common earth shows on it and destroys its shining purity.

2. It is also *peaceable*. That is an excellent test whether the teaching which a man thinks

he has received from God really comes from God or not. Does it make him contentious and aggressive? Or, even while he is endeavouring to prevail upon Christian men to receive a truth which they regard with suspicion and distrust, is it clear that his affection for them is unbroken, and that he dreads the prevalence of bitterness and ill-temper among Christian people as much as he dreads the power of error? Is it manifest that he does not suppose his clearer vision of some great truth impairs the worth of all that his brethren had known of that truth before—that he does not imagine that their claim to be regarded as loyal to Christ is lessened by the error which, as he thinks, he has discovered in their creed? Does he teach, or does he fight? Does he imply that the new truth which he has to tell gives him some personal distinction?

Lord Bolingbroke said of Fénelon that 'the Archbishop never *outshone*, but would lead you into truths in such a manner that you thought you discovered them yourself.' What a wonderful contrast to the insolent contempt for all who do not accept their opinions which characterizes some public speakers. The mere profession of brotherly affection for those from whom we differ is not enough. Do we actually treat them as brothers, and as brothers whom we love? Cardinal Newman, in his reply to Dr. Pusey's *Eirenicon*, said, 'You have discharged your olive branch from a catapult'; and there are some professions of a peaceable disposition which are more aggressive and exasperating than a declaration of war.

3. Wisdom—the true wisdom—is *gentle*. The gentleness which James attributes to it is that perfection and grace about which Matthew Arnold had so much to say, and to which he gave the name of 'sweet reasonableness.' Arnold says that 'This mildness and sweet reasonableness it was which, stamped with the individual charm they had in Jesus Christ, came into the world as something new, won its heart and conquered it. Every one had been asserting his ordinary self and was miserable; to forbear to assert one's ordinary self, to place one's happiness in mildness and sweet reasonableness, was a revelation.' He thought, and had good reason for thinking, that all of us are greatly wanting in it. Aristotle in a passage quoted by Mayor in his *Commentary*, has a charming description of this virtue. In his Ethics he contrasts it with strict justice; in his Rhetoric he gives a more detailed account of it. Translators differ as to the best English equivalent for its name. Grant gives 'equity.' It is 'equity,' said Aristotle, 'to pardon human failings, and to look to the lawgiver and not to the law, to the spirit and not to the letter, to the intention and not to the action, to the whole and not to the part, to the character of the actor in the long-run and not in the present moment, to remember good rather than evil, and good that one has received rather than good that one has done, to put up with injurious treatment, to wish to settle a matter by words rather than by deeds, to prefer arbitration to judgment.

Try to imagine the change that would pass upon human life if this virtue were common, were universal. How much that irritates and wounds and leaves a rankling sense of injustice would disappear! How few would be the friendships that we should lose, how few the enmities that we should create! It is a virtue that should appear in our intercourse with our equals and our superiors; but it is especially a virtue to be illustrated in our relations to those over whom we have more or less authority; and if in the relations of masters and mistresses to those in their employment, of foremen to workmen, of old to young, of parents to children, there were this gentleness, this equity, this sweet reasonableness, how different would be the atmosphere and temper of our places of business and our homes!

¶ Perhaps his [Charles Marriott's] grace,—certainly his most interesting characteristic,—was his unbounded *Charity*, using that word of course in its Gospel sense. He recognized the good in everything and in everybody: in his opponents,—and in conflicting schools of thought,—and in rival parties,—and in unsound books,—and in false philosophy,—and in erroneous propositions. When we were

reading over the papers of candidates for a Fellowship, and perhaps making merry over some extremely foggy production,—'O' (Marriott would exclaim) 'the man *has* a *view*!' And he would proceed to hammer out what, to his apprehension, the man (though he certainly had not said it) at least had intended to say. This wonderful kindness and *considerateness* of disposition: this indomitable readiness to make allowances for everybody, and determination to see 'good in everything,' —resulted in a loveliness of character which there is really no describing. He never said a harsh thing,—nor, I verily believe, *thought very* ill of,—anybody.[1]

¶ He was thoughtful for those about him. 'He had a little servant,' Mrs. Booth-Hellberg told me, 'who every morning came into the room to sweep the carpet, and the General always spoke to her, very sweetly and tenderly. He insisted, too, that this servant, and his secretary, should always have a day off every week. He would ask me continually, "Have they had their day off?" If for any reason we had not been able to manage so that they could have this holiday, he was upset, and complained to me about it, saying that nothing ought to prevent that arrangement.'[2]

4. Wisdom is *easy to be entreated*. The phrase has such beauty in it that we feel reluctant to make any attempt to explain its meaning. It describes a temper the opposite of self-will, self-assertion, obstinacy. This, too, is a virtue to be shown towards persons of every description. But as 'gentleness,' 'sweet reasonableness,' finds its most excellent and gracious expression in our relations to those over whom we have some kind of authority, this virtue has its special exercise in our relations to those who have some kind of authority over us. One ancient author says that he alone has this virtue who 'willingly,' not reluctantly, 'submits to a true fatherly will.' The word is often used to describe the temper which submits easily and cheerfully to military discipline. Mayor thinks that it might fairly be translated by the words 'submissive, docile, tractable.'

Is this virtue less common than it used to be? As it is a virtue of educated, as distinguished from untaught and undisciplined, men, of a civilized people, as distinguished from barbarian, it ought to be more common in our days than it was in past times. But to-day there are only too many in whose character it is absent, and whose worth as members of the social order is greatly lessened by its absence—persons who find it intolerable to recognize any authority over them, to obey orders, to give an account of themselves and of their work to those whose right and duty it is to require it; who resent, sometimes passionately, sometimes sullenly, all interference on the part of their parents, or of those who employ them, or who are responsible for their work. There are those who refuse to do a thing simply because they have been asked to do it, and who would have done it cheerfully if they had not been asked; there are those who, if requested to do a thing in one way, are certain to do it in another. They are always putting grit in the wheels of every machine that they touch. There are men who seem unable to learn that if we are to live together in any kind of society, whether that of a family, a city, a nation, or a Church, some arrangements must be made by responsible persons, and that these arrangements should be loyally accepted. This incapacity to keep in the ranks, to walk in the road and not trespass, to do as other people do, is shown in many odd ways. If the congregation to which they belong supports the London Missionary Society, they subscribe to the China Inland Mission, or to a special Mission on the Congo. They forget that we are members one of another, and that hearty co-operation is necessary if the life of the Church is to be vigorous and its work effectively done. We should learn to care for things for which our brethren care, and should make our strength and resources theirs. We should not stand apart from them for the mere sake of standing apart, or to gratify a personal preference and taste; we should not do things in our own way when

[1] J. W. Burgon, *Lives of Twelve Good Men*, 358.
[2] *William Booth*, ii. 464.

we can do it in their way, and so increase the efficiency of their service.

5. *It is full of mercy and good fruits.* There is a kind of wisdom, often called a knowledge of the world, which makes men cynical and hardens their hearts against the appeals of misfortune, of weakness, of error, of sin. Sympathy, forbearance, and generosity, so they say, can do nothing to lessen the follies and miseries of the world. Help a man to-day—he will be equally in want of help next week. Pass over a man's fault to-day—he will commit it again within a month. What is the use of taking trouble to relieve the distress of people whose weaknesses or whose vices will always prevent them from living a quiet and prosperous life? The possessors of this wisdom will say very shrewd things about the real causes of the sufferings of vast masses of men, but will do nothing to lessen them. They will speculate on the laws which make some nations, some individuals, prosperous, but upon other nations, other individuals, bring great calamities; and the only conclusion from their speculation is, that while there is a great deal of weakness and vice and misery in the world, nothing can be done to make the race stronger, wiser, better, happier.

This wisdom, however profound it may appear, is not, according to James, the wisdom that 'cometh from above.' It comes from a wide and thoughtful observation of mankind, not from fellowship with God. It leaves God out of account, and therefore despairs of man. But the true wisdom—the wisdom that God gives—looks upon men in the light of God, bears with their sins, pities their sorrows, is strenuous in the endeavour to relieve their sufferings, and to hold them to the habits of a virtuous, honourable, and Christian life. It is 'full of mercy and good fruits.'

¶ William J. Locke, in his novel entitled 'Simon the Jester,' represents Simon, the hero of the book, walking along a street in the East End with Campion, an enthusiast in rescue work:

An anæmic flirtatious group passed us, the girls in front, the boys behind.

'Good God, Campion,' says Simon, 'what *can* you do?'

'Pity them, old chap,' he returned quickly.

'What's the good of that?'

'Good? Oh, I see.' He laughed with a touch of scorn. 'It's a question of definition. When you see a fellow-creature suffering and it shocks your refined sensibilities and you say, 'poor devil,' and pass on, you think you have pitied him. But you haven't. You think pity's a passive virtue. But it isn't. If you really pity anybody, you go mad to help him. You don't stand by with tears of sensibility running down your cheeks. You stretch out your hand because you've got to. If he won't take it, or wipes you over the head, that's his look-out. You can't work miracles. But once in a way he does take it, and then—well, you work with all your might to pull him through. And if you do, what bigger thing is there in the world than the salvation of a human soul?'

6. *It is without variance.* That is a phrase, which conveys no meaning, and yet perhaps it is the best that the Revisers could have chosen. Nor is it at all easy to discover what the word which it is intended to represent stands for. It is a word about which New Testament scholars are much perplexed. Its meaning may be discovered by considering the contrast in one very important particular between what is called worldly wisdom, and the wisdom which cometh *from above.* The man whose conduct is governed by worldly wisdom is apt to be shifty—what he himself would call politic. He sets his sails to the prevailing wind; speaks well of men to-day of whom he spoke ill yesterday—not because the men themselves are better than they were, but because yesterday he could get nothing by speaking well of them, and to-day he can. His very judgment of men is determined by his interests or his passions; and since with changing circumstances his interests and his passions vary, his judgment varies too. But the man who is governed by Divine wisdom has his fixed principles, and by these both his judgment and his conduct are ruled. He looks upon human affairs from Divine heights. The com-

pass which guides his course is not deflected from its true meridian by the attraction of self-interest, or by the varying currents of prevailing opinion. He judges men to-day as he judged them yesterday—unless indeed he has learnt new facts about them which require him to modify his judgment. He does not think better of them simply because they have become rich and powerful and able to help him, or worse of them because they have become poor, have lost their riches and are unable to help him any longer. He does not treat them differently for any such reasons as these. He maintains that true consistency which comes not from an obstinate adherence to his own opinions, but from persistent loyalty to the high and eternal principles by which human conviction and human conduct should be governed. This suggests that quality of Divine wisdom which is described by the word which the phrase 'without variance' represents.

7. *It is without hypocrisy.* That phrase needs no explanation. Worldly wisdom may often make a man a hypocrite, may lead him to flatter men whom he despises, to profess a zeal for opinions in which he has no serious belief, to affect generosity and public spirit, when he is only seeking personal consideration and advancement; but the man who has the wisdom that cometh 'from above,' always takes God into account, and to him hypocrisy is impossible.

To James this wisdom is a Divine gift. It 'cometh down from above.' It is not to be acquired by any experience of human life, by the largest and most thoughtful observation of the ways and fortunes of men. If a man lacks this wisdom, he is to 'ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not.'[1]

¶ 'Hypocrisy cometh nearest to virtue, and is the worst of vices.' It pays homage to truth as if delighting in its worship. Wherever men of faith and honour gather together it will be found in their company. It is wary and persistent, alternately bold and cautious, but always cowardly. Yet sooner or later it betrays itself. It shrivels in the crucible of reality. Those who are adepts in its sinister arts are incapable of self-sacrifice. A fair weather companion, the hypocrite deserts in the dark and stormy days of struggle, opposition, or contempt. Full of fair promise, he bears no fruit. If any immediate advantage is to be gained, he will forthwith desert what he has hitherto served with a specious adulation.

Religion is not the only sphere of hypocrisy, and though here its work is most to be feared, it is to be found in politics, in business, and in every sphere of social life. But while it inflicts harm on everything it touches, its own success is its worst fate, for those who practise it become perverted by their own vice. In the task of deceiving others they end in deceiving themselves. This is the sure punishment of hypocrisy, and that which makes it the most deadly of all vices. The author of 'Ecce Homo' called it the one incurable vice, and he is right.[1]

[1] R. W. Dale, *The Epistle of James*, 109ff.

Asking Amiss.

Ja. iv. 3.—'Ye ask and receive not, because ye ask amiss.'

'Ye ask and receive not'—it is a common experience. Why? 'Because,' says James, 'ye ask amiss.' When do we ask amiss? When is our prayer unanswerable?

1. When prayer is thought of and said as *a sort of charm*, that is praying amiss. Our Saviour referred to this when He told His disciples not to use vain repetitions in their prayers, as if the efficacy of them depended on much speaking. In days gone by people used to carry about with them little scraps of paper with strange words written on them, or peculiar pebbles, or tiny phials of supposed magical liquid, or other things equally foolish; and these were supposed to preserve them from accident, to give them success in their

[1] *The Spirit of Man*, Selected Essays from 'The Times,' ii. 223.

enterprises, to make other people love them, to give them powers and immunities which otherwise they would not possess. These things were called 'charms,' and saying prayers is sometimes thought of as a charm. The Catholic will say so many 'Paternosters' as a charm, and the Protestant will rapidly whisper a few words of prayer before he gets into bed at night, with scarcely a thought as to their real meaning, or of the Being to whom they are supposed to be addressed. The mere saying of the words acts as a charm. It has a magic virtue in it. That is praying amiss, is not true prayer at all, and brings no blessing.

¶ 'Do you think prayers are ever answered?' inquired Conrad. 'In my life I have sent up many prayers, and always with the attempt to persuade myself that some former prayer had been fulfilled. But I knew. I knew in my heart none ever had been. Things that I wanted have come to me, but—I say it with all reverence—too late, as the means to gratify a critical taste in claret may come to a man only when he suffers from rheumatism.'

Mr. Irquetson's fine hand wandered across his brow. 'Once,' he began conversationally, 'I was passing with a friend through Grosvenor Street. It was when in the spring the tenant's fancy lightly turns to coats of paint, and we came to a ladder leaning against a house that was being redecorated. In stepping to the outer side of the ladder my friend lifted his hat to it; you may know the superstition. He was a 'Varsity man, a man of considerable attainments. I said, "Is it possible that you believe in that nonsense?" He said, "N-no, I don't exactly believe in it, but I never throw away a chance."' On a sudden the Vicar's inflexion changed, his utterance was solemn, stirring, devout: 'I think, sir, that most people pray on my friend's principle—they don't believe in it, but they never throw away a chance.' [1]

2. We ask amiss when our prayer-saying is *a merely formal thing*. For example, if we come to church simply because we have got into the habit of coming, we must not suppose that God cares very much about it. We need a certain amount of form and custom in our devotional exercises, we need stated seasons for private prayer every day, we need set times for public worship, and a certain regularity in the conduct of it; but unless we put heart and thought into these formal observances, instead of doing us good they may do us harm. He who neglects these formal, regular methods of prayer neglects them at the peril of his soul. If we give up the habit of private prayer we are in danger of slipping away from God altogether. But if, keeping up the observances, we do so without faith, without heart, we are precisely in the same danger. Who of us has not knelt down to pray, and said a prayer, and been thinking of something else all the time? And in church do we not sometimes find our thoughts wandering? We are thinking of something that happened yesterday, or of what we are going to do to-morrow, or of the appearance of our neighbour in the next pew, or of how we are going to spend the afternoon, or of politics, or pic-nics, or what not. Have we not all caught ourselves in this religious vagabondism—caught ourselves running away from God? Of course we have, and the result has been that the service has done us hardly any good, spiritually. Socially it may have been pleasant, for we have met our friends and shaken hands; mentally and physically it may have been useful, for it has been a little change and rest; but spiritually and religiously it has almost been wasted time.

3. Jesus has warned us against another kind of praying amiss. He speaks of those who love to pray *to be seen of men*. Well, that is not a common fault in the churches to which we belong. Indeed, we are rather in danger of erring in the other direction. We keep our religion so much to ourselves that some people make the mistake of supposing that we have none. But there is a kind of praying to be seen of men, not of the hypocritical sort, but yet of a dangerous sort, to which those of us in the ministry are liable. We who have to

[1] L. Merrick, *Conrad in Quest of his Youth*.

conduct public worship are in danger of addressing our prayers only nominally to God, but really to the people. We fancy they are listening with critical ears; that they mark lame sentences and inapt expressions; and, as a consequence, we sometimes feel constrained, and often lack that true touch of devotion which is essential to effectual prayer.

¶ Public prayer is a grave danger for a minister. It is so easy to say what we know is the proper thing to say even when it tinkles emptily in our mind. And, as Mr. Birrell has it, that must be a dreadful moment when a man has the feeling he is praying well.[1]

4. We ask amiss *if we suppose that prayer is to accomplish what ought to be laboured for.* Some years ago a suggestion was made for the scientific testing of the real value of prayer. The suggestion was this: that a ward of some hospital should be set aside for the cure, if that were possible, of cases of sickness by the power of prayer alone; and another ward, having just the same number of patients, suffering in the same way, should have no prayer offered for it at all, but the ordinary appliances of medical and surgical skill should be employed. After a specified time the results should be compared, and it would then be seen whether there was any efficacy in prayer or not. The suggestion was, of course, absurd on the face of it, for who could prevent prayer being made for the ward where human skill and appliances were to be used? Who could keep the patients from praying for themselves? Who could keep their friends outside from praying for them? But, apart from that, the notion of prayer that the suggestion implied was a quite blasphemous one. As if God had allowed men to pray to Him in order that they might be spared the use of the faculties, the skill, the appliances with which He Himself had endowed them! Prayer is no substitute for labour. Prayer is not for idle people. Prayer is the benediction of labour, the sanctification of industry, the power which brings the blessing of heaven down upon earnest human endeavours. You can no more put prayer in the place of effort than you can put poetry in the place of science.

5. There is one thing more to be noticed. We pray amiss *if we are not full of the spirit of submission to God's will* when we pray. The undertone of every prayer must be, 'Thy will be done.' There is nothing that we may not pray about; nothing that we feel would be for our good that we may not ask God for. But never must we forget that what *we* think would be for our good might not be so in reality; that God knows best. This is one of the hardest lessons of Christian living that we have to master. When we see that the drift of life is in another direction than the one we so much wanted it to take; when we find that the things we have hoped for and are still hoping for are becoming less and less likely of attainment, it is hard to say, The will of the Lord be done. But, if we can say it, then, and not till then, our prayers will do their perfect work; we shall be brought into oneness with our Saviour, and our life shall be hid with Him in God.[1]

Thy will be done, not mine, O Lord of Love!
On Earth below, as in blest Heaven above,
That good and perfect will I fain would
prove.

Long did my soul in paths self-chosen run,
The path appointed me persistent shun;
Now let Thine all-wise will in me be done.

Long, did I, seeking but what should console,
Put from rebellious lips the bitter bowl,
Spurning the tonic draught would make me
whole.

Contemning its remedial properties—
Refused the one true cure for my disease:
Now would I drain it even to the lees.[2]

[1] A. J. Gossip, *In Christ's Stead*, 50.

[1] J. K. Pike, *Unfailing Goodness and Mercy*, 47ff.
[2] William Hall.

The Yearning Love of the Spirit.

Ja. iv. 5.—'The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy.'

At first glance this expression, as it stands in the Authorized Version—'The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy'—is apt to be taken in a wrong sense. Lust and envy, one thinks, belong, of course, to the corrupt heart. Reverent scholarship has taught us to find here an entirely different meaning. 'The spirit that dwelleth in us' refers not to our natural corruption, but to the Spirit which He hath placed in us, which He hath made to dwell in us, that is, the good Spirit of God. The Spirit of God in the Christian claims him entirely for His own. Then again, the phrase 'lusteth to envy' should be rendered 'enviously longeth,' 'jealously desireth.' It is the same word that is used elsewhere in reference to God as yearning for the entire affection of His people.

James was writing to a certain class of Hebrew Christians, very much mixed up with the world, who thought they could serve God and Mammon at the same time. He asks them how they can expect that there will be anything but wars amongst them, and unanswered prayers. He tells them that God will not dwell with His Church until it returns and humbles itself under the mighty hand of God. 'Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded.' What does he mean by calling such 'double minded'? He does not mean deceivers or hypocrites, but those who try to walk on both sides of the street at once—with Christ, and with the enemies of Christ. And this he declares to be impossible. He tells them in these verses that God jealously desires their whole affection, their entire life. The word used here is the same as that in the Old Testament figure of the eagle *fluttering* over her young; the spirit that dwells in God's children exercises towards them the tender jealousy of the mother bird for her brood.

Thus, in its general meaning, our text is general Bible-teaching. It announces nothing that had not been the possession of God's people concerning His love for them from the days of old. Its message to us is just the common message of the whole Scripture revelation, in Old and New Testament alike. But it has its own peculiarities in expressing this one great common message of God's yearning love for His people. And possibly there may be found a special lesson for us in these peculiarities.

1. The first of these which claims our attention is the intense energy of the expression which is used here to declare the love of God for His erring people. He is said (*cf.* RV) to 'yearn for us, even unto jealous envy.' Modes of speech sufficiently strong had been employed by the prophets of the Old Testament, in the effort to communicate to men the vehemence of God's grief over their sin and the ardour of His longing to recover them to Himself. The simple attribution of the passion of jealousy to Him one would fancy a representation forcible enough. And this representation is heightened in every conceivable way. Even in Exodus (xxxiv. 14) we meet it in the strengthened form which declares that the very name of God is Jealous—'for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God'—as if this were the characteristic emotion which expressed His very being. Nahum tells us that 'the Lord is a jealous God and avengeth; the Lord avengeth and is full of wrath' (Nah. i. 2). And in Zechariah we read that the Lord is 'jealous for Zion with great jealousy,' and He is 'jealous for her with great fury' (Zech. viii. 2).

But the language of James has an intensity which rises above all Old Testament precedent. Not only does the verb he uses express the idea of eager longing as strongly as it is possible to express it; but its already strong emphasis is still further enhanced by an adverbial addition which goes beyond all usage. The verb is that employed by the Greek translators of the Forty-second Psalm: 'As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God.' So, with the thirst of

the famishing hart for water, says James, does God pant after His people whose minds wander from Him. The adverb is one which often occurs in the classics to express the feeling that one is apt to cherish toward a rival; but it is not the ordinary active word for jealousy which is frequently applied to God in the Scriptures; but a term of deeper passion which is never elsewhere applied to God, and which is expressive rather of the envious emotion which tears the soul as it contemplates a rival's success. So, with this sickening envy, says James, God contemplates our dallying with the world and the world's pleasures. He envies the world our love—the love due to Him, pledged to Him, but basely withdrawn from Him and squandered upon the world. God is represented as panting, yearning, after us, even unto not merely jealousy, but jealous envy. Such vehemence of feeling in God is almost incredible; and some commentators indeed, refuse to believe that it can be ascribed to Him and declare the anthropomorphism involved to be altogether too extreme. Let us not, however, refuse the blessed assurance that is given us. It is no doubt hard to believe that God loves us. It is doubtless harder to believe that He loves us with so ardent a love as is here described. But He says that He does.

2. Another peculiarity of the text lies in the clearness with which it applies the object of this great love of God to individuals. When the Scriptures make use of the figure of marriage to reveal God's love to His people, it is commonly His people as a body that they have in mind. It is, in the Old Testament, the 'house of Israel' whom Jehovah has chosen to be His wife; in the New Testament it is the Church that is the bride, the Lamb's wife. Individuals, as members in particular of the body of Israel or of the Church, partake of its fortunes, share in the love poured out upon it, and contribute by their lives to the foulness of its sin or to the beauty of its holiness. It is only as the members are holy that the Church can be that glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but holy and without blemish, which Christ is to present to Himself at the last day. But, though the individuals thus share in the love and glory of the Church, it is the Church, not the individual, that is prevailingly represented as the bride of the Lamb. Only occasionally, in the application of the figure, do the individuals seem to be prominently in mind (Ps. lxxiii. 27; Rom. vii. 4).

In our present passage, however, the reference is directed to the individual and not to the Church as a body. It is the individual Christian who is in covenant vows to God, and who is forgetting these vows, when in the prosecution of his pleasures he strives with his fellow-man, instead of depending on God's love to fulfil all his wants. It is the individual who is warned that he is guilty of spiritual adultery when he permits the least shade of love of the world to enter his heart; and that the cherishing of such love even in thought is an act of enmity against God. It is the individual who is assured that God jealously envies the world the love that he gives it, and yearns after the return of his love to Him, the Lord, who 'longeth for him even unto jealous envy.'

¶ The hero of Jerome K. Jerome's recent book, *Anthony John*, makes this discovery.

We see little Anthony John growing up from the sturdy little boy who shocked his mother by mistaking a kindly benefactor for the Deity as he had been told that 'all good gifts come from God,' and bluntly saying 'He didn't look very glorious'—right through his successful career at school and as a solicitor and company promoter. His inquiring turn of mind continues to extend to religious questions. . . .

Anthony John goes far, and the manufacturing town of Millsborough becomes a very different place from the town of his youth as a result of his labours. He has had the desire to serve his fellow-beings all the time, and at intervals, through model dwellings, libraries, and philanthropies, he has tried to ease their lot. But a little germ of dissatisfaction has been continually growing. More and more he feels the call to a heroic religion—

a religion which would be belief in action. 'Fighting for God,' he says, 'fighting with God to save the world. Not to save oneself—not to get one's own sweet self into Heaven, that is the mistake that has been made; appealing to the self that is in man instead of the Christ that is in man. It is heroes God wants, not mercenaries.'

But he has his time of indecision and depression. 'And then gradually out of his despair had arisen in him a great pity for God. It startled him at first. It was so grotesque an idea. . . . The loneliness of God. He saw Him as a Leader, betrayed, deserted. He must make his way to God's side. God wanted him.'

This is the same discovery that John Wilhelm Rowntree made when, as he says, he suddenly realized 'Sin hurts God.'

At last Anthony John made the great acceptance. Complete worldly success within his grasp, he decides to leave all and go back to working-class Millsborough and earn what he can as a poor solicitor among poor men. Even the torture of the thought that his wife may not be able to accept the way of 'giving up all to follow Christ' does not deter him. But the book closes with the joy of her decision to be with him.[1]

3. A third peculiarity of the text lies in its direct attribution of this appropriating love of God for His chosen ones to God the Holy Spirit. In this the text is almost unique in the whole range of Scripture. In the Old Testament it is Jehovah, the covenant God, who represents the covenanted union between Israel and Himself under the figure of a marriage. It is Jehovah whose name is Jealous; whose jealousy burns unto envy as He contemplates the unfaithfulness of Israel. In the New Testament it is prevailingly Christ, the Lamb, who has taken the Church unto Himself as His bride; and who loves and cherishes His Church as a husband loves and cherishes his wife. But in our present passage it is specifically God the Holy Spirit who is represented as the subject of this envious jealousy and this yearning affection.

And surely it is a great gain from the point of view of the Christian life to have this explicit revelation of the heart of the indwelling Spirit. Do we remember that the Holy Spirit loves us? Do we comfort ourselves so often and so fully with this great fact? We feel the lift of John's appeal: 'Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.' We feel the force of Paul's declaration that 'the love of Christ constraineth us.' Are we equally impelled to a life of single-hearted devotion to God by James's challenge: 'Or think ye that it is a vain and empty saying of Scripture, that the Spirit which God hath made to dwell in us yearneth after us even unto jealous envy?' Does it not too often pass over our minds as if it were really a vain and empty saying? The love of the Spirit! The yearning, jealous love of the Holy Ghost for our souls!

¶ Among the legends which popular fancy has woven around the memory of Francis of Assisi, we are told that he was riding along one day in the first joy of his new-found peace, his mind possessed with a desire to live over again the life of absolute love which his Divine master had lived on the earth. Suddenly, 'at a turn in the road, he found himself face to face with a leper. The frightful malady had always inspired in him an invincible repulsion. He could not control a movement of horror, and by instinct he turned his horse in another direction.' Then came the quick revulsion of feeling. 'He retraced his steps and, springing from his horse, he gave to the astonished sufferer all the money that he had; and then kissed his hand, as he would have done to a priest.' A new era in his spiritual life had dawned. He visited the lazaretto itself and with largesse of alms and kindly words sought to bring some brightness of the outside world into that gloomy retreat. Still his love grew stronger. The day came when he made the great renunciation and stood before men endued with naught but the love of Christ. Now no temporary lazaretto contented him. He must dwell there as a

[1] H. W. Peet, in *The Wayfarer*, May, 1923.

permanent sunbeam to the distressed. He came now with empty hands, but with a heart full to overflowing with compassion. 'Taking up his abode in the midst of the afflicted he lavished upon them a most touching care, washing and wiping their sores, all the more gentle and radiant as the sores were more repulsive.'

It is not given to man, of course, even to comprehend, much less to embody in a legend like this, all the richness of God's mysterious love for sinners. But in such legends as this we may catch some faint shadow of what the Spirit's love for us means. No leprous sores can be as foul in the eyes of the daintiest bred as sin is foul in the eyes of the Holy Ghost. We cannot conceive of the energy of His shrinking from its polluting touch. Yet He comes into the foul lazaretto of our hearts and dwells there—permanently lives there; not for Himself, or for any good to accrue to Himself; but solely that He may cleanse us and fit us to be what He has made us, the Bride, the Lamb's wife.[1]

¶ Not in vain are the promises of God. 'The spirit which he made to dwell in us jealously yearns for our devotion.' This accepted translation of a difficult phrase would mean far more to the original readers than to us. As a quotation it had some apt and practical application. To us it serves as a reminder of the wondrous Love of God whereby He hath bequeathed us that spark of His Divine nature which longs fervently to consume our whole nature. We crush and stifle it. When we faithfully give full scope to Christ's spirit in us, our grace is enriched, and we are controlled of God, and not of the world. The Spirit jealously yearns—alas! how often it is disappointed. It is Love's longing, sighing, waiting, bearing, if in the end we shall but give our devotion. Unwilling to surrender us to our faithless follies, but jealous for the devotion we give to them: grieved that our love should wander, yet continuing His gifts of tenderness and compassion; when, oh! when, shall Christian hearts be fully touched and awakened by that infinite and inexpressible Love of Him whose very nature and name is Love?[1]

HUMILITY.

Ja. iv. 6.—'God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.'

This is a sentiment to which we all very readily respond. Nothing is so generally intolerable as pride, nobody so universally unpopular as the bumptious man. We all delight to hear of his being taken down a peg. No matter how great his merits may be, or how distinguished his services, as soon as he begins to boast himself he becomes insufferable. We all enter into a conspiracy to belittle him and to bring him low. On the contrary, when we meet a genuinely humble man we delight to sing his praise, to bring his good qualities to light, and to push him to the front. Now the assertion of our text is that God feels and acts in the very same way. 'God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.' Pride is as odious in the sight of heaven as it is among men, and humility as pleasing. There is that in the moral government of the universe which will bring the proud man down to the dust and set the crown upon the brow of the humble.

I.

THE CRY OF THE HUMBLE.

Such sentiments are expressed throughout Scripture with extraordinary frequency and emphasis. Old Testament history, from Babel to Nebuchadnezzar, abounds in examples which teach that 'pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall' (Prov. xvi.

[1] B. B. Warfield, *The Power of God unto Salvation*, 126ff.

[1] J. MacDougall, *The Modern Conflict*, 84.

18). Prophet and psalmist are never weary of telling that 'though the Lord be high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly, but the proud he knoweth afar off' (Ps. cxxxviii. 6), that 'he scorneth the scorners, but he giveth grace to the lowly' (Prov. iii. 34). In some of these utterances there is evident a grim satisfaction in the anticipated downfall of the mighty, not to mention an unholy thirst for revenge. Nor is it to be wondered at. The people of God had suffered long, had been trodden under foot time after time by the proud kings of the earth and the haughty war-lords. The Rab-shakehs had poured scorn upon the God of Israel and provoked high heaven by their insufferable insolence. It was but natural that the oppressed should exult in the coming of a day when the 'lofty looks of men shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day' (Is. ii. 11).

We find similar feelings expressed in Greek literature. The head that is lifted too high attracts Jove's lightning. The gods puff up with pride the man whom they mean to destroy, so that none may grieve for him in his fall. King Agamemnon's wife, plotting to murder him, tempts him to an act of pride so that thereby he may forfeit the favour of heaven. No doubt, underlying this there is the impression that the gods are jealous of all greatness but their own, that they resemble oriental despots whose favour swiftly changes to wrath the moment the favourite presumes. Such superstititous notions are found to be widely prevalent in all religions, and they linger on in many Christian minds. It is the part of prudence to lie low. As Caliban expresses it in his meditations upon Setebos,

> 'the best way to escape His ire
> Is, not to seem too happy.' [1]

There is, of course, little of true religious feeling in such utterances. God is not such as men have darkly imagined, nor can His actions be governed by such impulses as they have attributed to Him. It might be supposed, therefore, that the exultant predictions in the Old Testament of the downfall of the proud and the exaltation of the humble are but the bitter cry of the oppressed who thirst for requital, and that they give no guarantee that thus it will come to pass. But when we turn to the New Testament we find the same cry breaking forth, not with any hatred or spirit of revenge or bitterness of hope deferred, but with the triumphant assurance that now at last it *has* come to pass in the sight of all men through the wonderful working of God. Mary said, 'My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden. . . . He hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their heart. He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree. He hath filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he hath sent empty away' (Luke i. 46). Who had a better right to say these things than the maiden mother of our Lord, for the whole manner of His coming into the world was such as to pour contempt on human pride and glorify the humble.

This is confirmed by the explicit teaching of our Lord Himself. No word seems to have been more frequently on His lips than the solemn warning, 'Every one that exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.' On this ground He bade His disciples refuse titles of honour and take the lowest place at the feast, while in the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican He made it the reason why the latter went down to his house justified rather than the other. He reserved the blessings of His Kingdom for the meek and the poor in spirit, and by His whole attitude and teaching He declared that 'God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.'

It would appear, then, that there is something in pride which alienates a man from God and excludes him from the Divine favour, whereas humility is the condition of all blessing, and it is of the very essence of true religion that a man should 'walk humbly with his God.' We shall better understand this,

[1] Browning.

and see how inevitable it is, if we consider what is the nature of humility.

II.

THE GRACE OF HUMILITY.

1. *Humility is a purely Christian grace.* Nothing could possibly be more profoundly at variance with the spirit of the world. When our Lord blessed humility, when by His teaching and example He impressed upon His disciples that they were not to strive for pre-eminence but were to humble thmselves that they might be exalted, His words must have appeared paradoxical and His meaning unintelligible to the world of His day. Paganism valued and cultivated an entirely opposite spirit. It might not be prudent to boast too loudly or to make too ostentatious a display lest some Nemesis befall, but the spirit of self-assertion, the attitude of proud self-sufficiency was commended on the highest authority. The whole morality of the Stoics, the noblest ethical system of the ancient world, rested upon this foundation. The moral hero was he who, firm in his own strength, could withstand all the shocks of fate. 'Life and death in the Stoical system were attuned to the same key. The deification of human virtue, the total absence of all sense of sin, the proud, stubborn will that deemed humiliation the worst of stains, appeared alike in each. The type of its own kind was perfect. All the virtues and all the majesty that accompany human pride, when developed to the highest point, and directed to the noblest ends, were here displayed. All those which accompany humility and self-abasement were absent.'[1]

Such being the noblest pagan morality, it may be imagined how utterly alien to the thought and life of the time was the spirit of humility. 'Paganism was not humble, because to paganism the true God was but a name. The whole life and thought of the pagan world was therefore very naturally based on pride. Its literature, its governments, its religious institutions, its social organization and hierarchy, its doctrines about human life and human duty—all alike were based on the principle of a boundless self-assertion. They were based on that cruel and brutal principle which in the end hands over to the keenest wit and to the strongest arm the sceptre of a tyranny that knows no bounds, save those of its strongest lust, checked and controlled by the most lively apprehensions of its selfish foresight.'[1]

This has been the spirit of the world in every age, except in so far as it has been held in check by conscience and subdued by Divine grace. And not least is it a characteristic of our own time. The successful business man of to-day is not generally credited with a meek and lowly spirit; he is not usually the sort of man who walks humbly with his God. 'What is there more that God could give me?' asked Andrew Carnegie. 'Well, for instance, there is the grace of humility,' replied Dr. Marshall Lang.[2] It was a shrewd thrust, not perhaps undeserved. The spirit of democracy is not favourable to the culture of humility. The modern working-man will pronounce with confidence upon any subject, domestic or foreign. He is fully assured of his own competence to judge and to decide. And why not? Does he not elect the rulers of the Empire, and do these rulers not continually assure him of his wisdom and worth? Little wonder if he is puffed up and thinks of himself more highly than he ought to think. St. Bernard, writing in what we call 'the age of faith,' makes the complaint that 'men are nowadays so full of charity that they wish to pour out before they are full; they are more ready to speak than to hear, and eager to teach what they have not learned.'[3] So the complaint is an old one, but never surely had it more force and point than in our time, when it seems as if everyone would fain be a teacher and a leader, and few have the humility to learn and to obey.

This self-confident, self-assertive spirit, so characteristic of modern life, is generally com-

[1] W. E. H. Leckie, *History of European Morals*, i. 223.

[1] H. P. Liddon, *Bampton Lectures for* 1866, p. 491.
[2] *Life of Lord Guthrie*, 233.
[3] *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics*, vi. 871.

mended because it is so forceful. It is the spirit that gets things done. Is it not by it that a man achieves success in life, that a big business is developed, that trade and commerce are pushed at home and abroad, that a world-wide empire is built up? True, doubtless, but then, on the other hand, is it not this same spirit that leads to cut-throat competition and the exploiting of the weak, to bitter jealousies between nations, and in the end to a world war? And so, once again, in these recent years, bitter experience has taught us that 'except the Lord build the house they labour in vain that build it' (Ps. cxxvii. 1), that it is better for a man to walk humbly with his God than to go ahead without God. Jesus confronts the proud and forceful world of to-day as He confronted the pride of Rome, saying, 'Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls.' How great would the gain be if men and nations would but hearken to Him, and, having now made full proof of their own folly, would forsake the evil way of pride and self-assertion, and henceforth walk humbly in His steps.

2. *Humility is based on truth.*—It is the simple, honest recognition of facts as they really are, and especially of our right relation to God. 'Humility,' says William Law, 'does not consist in abasing ourselves lower than we are. But as all virtue is founded on truth, so humility is founded in a true and just sense of our own weakness, misery, and sin.' Whatever we may be tempted to think about ourselves, our own abilities or merits, as compared with others, the moment we turn our thoughts to God our pride is crushed. For, apart from all confession of shortcoming and failure, we are bound to acknowledge that all that we have and are is of God.

> And every virtue we possess,
> And every victory won,
> And every thought of holiness
> Are His alone.

The greatest of God's servants, because they have been acutely conscious of this, have been among the most humble of men, and have renounced every temptation to pride as of the devil. Said John Knox on his death-bed, 'I have formerly, during my frail life, sustained many contests, and many assaults of Satan; but at present that roaring lion hath assailed me most furiously, and put forth all his strength to devour, and make an end of me at once. . . . The cunning serpent has laboured to persuade me that I have merited heaven . . . by the faithful discharge of my ministry. But blessed be God, who has enabled me to beat down and quench this fiery dart, by suggesting to me such passages of Scripture as these: "What hast thou that thou hast not received? By the grace of God I am what I am: Not I, but the grace of God in me." Being thus vanquished, he left me.'[1]

When we recognize the simple fact that humility is founded on a true estimate of ourselves as in the sight of God, it helps to clear away certain objections which naturally arise. For it cannot be denied that there is something unattractive, unheroic about humility. It is often regarded as an abject abasing of oneself, contrary to the spirit of manliness. It is regarded as essentially hypocritical, and this age is out for honesty and reality at all costs.

Now there is nothing hypocritical about humility. There have, doubtless, been base imitations of it, going even to the extravagant length of Uriah Heep. From all such an honest man will turn away with loathing. No doubt, also, sincerely humble men have used expressions about themselves which appear to ordinary people exaggerated, just as all Bunyan-like confessions of sin appear exaggerated. But it must be remembered that when the saints utter such confessions they are not thinking of themselves at all in comparison with others, but of themselves as they appear in the light of God's holiness. So in their humility they are conscious only of their utter nothingness. 'Dear daughter of the King,' exclaimed Mary Slessor to a friend who spoke in her praise, 'why do you say that? If you knew me as God does! Never say that

[1] T. McCrie, *Life of John Knox*, 267.

kind of thing again.'[1] A friend of the writer, a downright, honest fellow, if ever one lived, a man whose life was filled with works of goodness and whose service in war-time was conspicuous above most, when he came to the end, stretched out his hand upon the bed, palm upward, and said with deep feeling, 'Nothing in my hand I bring.' Such utterances are absolutely sincere, and express the conviction of souls profoundly in touch with reality, of which the other name is God. 'The truly humble man,' said Dr. Alexander Whyte, is he 'who has gone down deep into himself, and who abides there, and walks with God there.'[2]

Moreover there is nothing abject in the spirit of humility, nothing oriental or slavish about it. It is entirely consistent with manliness and self-respect. There have been teachers like Carlyle who have rebuked human vanity by pointing to the eternal stars, and have shown the utter insignificance of man and all his works. And there have been those who, under the influence of such teaching, have sunk into dreamy indifference or adopted an attitude of hard self-contempt. But this is alien to the Christian spirit of humility. An overwhelming sense of the *greatness* of God may lead to prostration and a paralysis of energy, but true humility comes of a heart-breaking sense of the grace of God. Grace, while it humbles, at the same time ennobles and inspires. There is no contradiction in a man feeling deeply his own unworthiness, whilst also conscious of his dignity and worth as a son of God. Here may be found the secret of how the greatest humility of heart is often joined with the greatest energy in action. The spirit of self-assertion is usually supposed to be the mainspring of action, but we find a Paul, who esteemed himself less than the least of the apostles, yet labouring more abundantly than them all; and a John, who called himself but a voice crying in the wilderness, declared by our Lord to be the greatest that had arisen among the sons of men.

[1] W. P. Livingstone, *Mary Slessor of Calabar*, 242.
[2] *Life*, 375.

Above all, humility must ever, by its very nature, be unconscious of itself. The humble man is he who thinks of himself as he truly is in the sight of God, and therefore his own thought of himself must always appear simply natural to his own mind. If for a moment he thought of himself as humble his humility would vanish, for then he would be secretly judging himself to be better than he professed to be. That would be a subtle conceit more detestable than the open assertiveness of the boaster. So it comes to pass that no man clothed with humility can grow conscious of the heavenly raiment he wears.

III.

THE FRUITS OF HUMILITY.

Humility, because it is based on truth, becomes the foundation of all moral excellence. 'Unless any one have dug deep by humility, and so reached the living Rock, their building is but like the house of cards at which children play: each storey is carefully fitted together, and placed on that below it, but the higher the little builder raises it, the more certain it is to fall.'[1] Because humility sets a man in his right place in relation to God, it becomes the gateway to all wisdom, the lowly portal through which we enter the Kingdom of Heaven. It is the hidden root which, reaching down to the nether springs, draws up nourishment for the sustenance of all the fruits of the spirit. For the Christian life humility is absolutely indispensable from first to last. Calvin in his *Institutes* says, 'I was exceedingly pleased with that saying of Chrysostom, "The foundation of our philosophy is humility," and yet more pleased with that of Augustine, "As," says he, "the rhetorician being asked what was the first thing in the rules of eloquence, answered, pronunciation, what was the second, pronunciation, what was the third, still answered pronunciation, so, if you shall ask me concerning the precepts of the Christian religion, I would answer, firstly, secondly, thirdly and for ever, hum-

[1] *Spiritual Letters of Pusey*, 81.

ility.'' ' This sweeping statement does not go beyond the simple truth, for without humility there can be, firstly, no penitence, secondly no Christian progress, thirdly no fruitfulness in service, and for ever no exaltation to eternal glory.

(1) *Without humility no penitence.*—'No man can turn his back upon his old life without an act of self-humiliation. It costs the spirit of pride a great deal to say, "All that I have attained so far is worthless in the sight of God." And no soul can become receptive of a new standard of life revealed by God without humbling itself to throw aside the methods and results of worldly wisdom, in order that it may accept the wisdom which is from above. Humility is a necessary part of repentance. This is the low and narrow gate which alone gives entrance into the Kingdom of God. No soul has entered that Kingdom without first of all humbling itself.'[1] The confession of Christian penitence has its two sides, one of self-abandonment, the other of faith in Christ. It speaks on this wise,

I'm a poor sinner, and nothing at all,
But Jesus Christ is my all in all.

No one can utter that confession but he who is humble and contrite in heart.

(2) *Without humility no Christian progress.*—For progress depends on teachableness, and nothing can be done with the man who is too proud to learn. It is for this reason that our Lord lays so much stress on the childlike spirit, for the child is teachable. All the wonderful progress in modern science has come through humility, when men ceased to rely upon their own philosophizings and were content to sit at Nature's feet and learn of her. The greatest discoveries have come through the observation of the simplest things—an apple falling from the tree, or steam coming through a kettle's spout. In no other way is progress made in the knowledge of Divine truth save by a man continually humbling himself to learn of Christ. And, be it observed, as knowledge increases so does humility. 'There hath happened,' says Montaigne, 'to the people of real knowledge what happeneth to ears of corn. As long as they are empty, they go on growing high and lifting up their heads straight and proud; but when they are full, and swelled with ripened grain, they begin to humble themselves and to bow their spikes.'[1]

(3) *Without humility no fruitfulness in service.*—Our Lord has set this truth before us with ever memorable impressiveness in His parable of the True Vine. 'I am the vine, ye are the branches,' He said to His disciples ere He sent them out on their world mission. 'Without me ye can do nothing.' The proud and self-willed man who takes his own way may seem for a time to prosper and accomplish much, but in the end his work will prove to be unsound. It is only as we yield ourselves to God and our members to be instruments of righteousness in His hand that we can accomplish anything of enduring good. Apart from Him we are but dead branches, fit only to be cast away.

(4) And yet once more, *without humility no exaltation.*—Again and again our Lord declared that only he that humbleth himself shall be exalted. The Christian must stoop to conquer. The lowly road of the Cross is the only highway to glory. There is no place in heaven for pride, for God Himself is humble.

IV.

THE HUMILITY OF GOD.

Humility is not usually reckoned as among the attributes of God, but His self-revelation in Jesus Christ means this if it means anything. The humility is beautiful because it is Christlike. There never was humility on earth like His. And, as the apostles are careful to point out, the surpassing wonder of it was that it was the humility of a Divine being. St. John says, 'Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God, he

[1] S. M. Berry, *Graces of the Christian Character*, 72.

[1] *Michel de Montaigne*, 224.

riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments, and took a towel and girded himself . . . and began to wash the disciples' feet.' St. Paul also, like St. John, is impressed by the same amazing thought. It was no mere man, but the Lord of glory, who stooped so humbly to the cross of shame. Being in the form of God He emptied Himself of His glory and took on Him the form of a slave.

The humility of Christ is the humility of God. It expresses, under conditions of time, an eternal truth—that God is forever humbling Himself in love to serve and to save His people. We find it so in the natural world. What are all the good gifts of Providence but God putting Himself at man's disposal, and with patient goodness supplying our daily wants? We ought not to think of these gifts in any abstract and impersonal way, but as the personal loving service of our heavenly Father. For as parents humble themselves in love for their little children, and are ready to serve them night and day in the meanest offices, even so, with infinitely more wonderful patience and condescension, does the Father in heaven minister to His children's needs. And in the fullness of time He became in Christ the world's Sin-bearer, the Minister of salvation to us all.

When the vision of this dawns upon the soul it begins to bring us to our senses. It overturns all our preconceptions of greatness and of littleness, it shatters all our pretensions to pride, for it shows us that the loftiest is the lowliest. And when at last a due impression of all this is brought home to our hearts, then we are ready to say in humble sincerity,

When I survey the wondrous cross
  On which the Prince of glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss,
  And pour contempt on all my pride.

J. H. Morrison.

Resisting the Devil.

Ja. iv. 7.—'Resist the devil and he will flee from you.'

The most momentous crisis in Christian's experience, as described in Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress, occurred when he entered the Valley of Humiliation.

'Now in this Valley of Humiliation poor Christian was hard put to it, for he had gone but a little way before he espied a foul fiend coming to meet him; his name is Apollyon.'

'Then did Christian begin to be afraid, and to cast in his mind whether to go back or to stand his ground.' But, bethinking himself that he had no armour on his back, he resolved to venture and stand his ground; so he went on and Apollyon met him.

Now the monster was hideous to behold: he was clothed with scales like a fish; he had wings like a dragon, feet like a bear, out of his belly came fire and smoke, and his mouth was like the mouth of a lion. When he came up to Christian he beheld him with a disdainful countenance, and began to question him as to where he came from, and what was his destination. Christian told him that he had come from the City of Destruction, and at this Apollyon claimed him as a subject. Then followed a long altercation, in which promises and threats mingled. Finding that he could make no way with Christian, the foul fiend prepared for the attack. A long and weary struggle ensued, in which Christian was wounded in head and hand and foot. His sword fell from his hand and he was almost done for. But as Apollyon was about to take his last revenge, Christian, nimbly reaching out his hand, grasped his sword once more, and shouting, 'Rejoice not against me, oh mine enemy,' gave Apollyon a deadly thrust, which made him reel back as one that had received a mortal wound. Then Christian made for him again, saying, as he gave him his final blow, 'In all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.' With that Apollyon spread forth his wings and sped away, and Christian saw him no more.

Now this old story touches one of the most awful facts of human life: man face to face with temptation, man beset by temptation, man in the grip of some deadly passion which he must fight or it will wreck him—that is what it means. And what a universal fact it is! As that wonderful old reader of the human heart, Thomas à Kempis, has it: 'There is no order so holy, nor place so secret as that there be not temptation or adversities in it. There is no man that is altogether free from temptation whilst he liveth on this earth, for the root thereof is in ourselves, who are born with inclination to evil.' Every man has his Apollyon to meet and vanquish some time in his life.

It is this that makes life at times so tragic. There is nothing more terrible, more hopelessly pathetic, than the sight of a man who has gone under in such a crisis. It is this that has given its impressiveness to the mighty tragedy in which the greatest of German poets has embodied the characteristic trial of our age—the tragedy of man, civilized and educated, in the presence of the twofold temptation of knowledge and passion, and staking his soul on the price of his desire. It is this that makes the moral breakdown of a man in any public position so fraught with warning.

But it is under conditions of trial such as these that we are proved and tested. What is the whole moral side and interest of human history but this—how man bears temptation, how he comes out of his trials? Political history, social history, the growth of civilization, the progress of the arts and sciences—all this is of great and undeniable interest; but there is a story of deeper interest still, the story that tells how men have played their part as moral beings accountable to that high law of right and wrong which lifts them above everything else in this visible universe; how under each new opportunity or emergency they have been faithful to truth, to duty, to goodness, to God; or have been blind to them and have betrayed them.

1. If, then, we would resist the devil, what shall be our first wisdom? Plainly this—to resist him in the only strength in which he can be effectually resisted, in the strength of Him who has said, 'My strength is sufficient for thee'; putting on the armour of God. How often we forget this; not altogether perhaps, but in part; relying on some strength of our own; wielding weapons which are carnal; acting as foolishly herein as David would have acted if, going to fight with the Philistine, he had encased and encumbered himself with the unserviceable armour of Saul. In all human likelihood this would have proved fatal to him. He would have forfeited the secret of his strength, that strength lying in the weakness which caused him to lean upon God, and thus to become partaker of a heavenly strength. So, too, let our strength be a strength in God and from God; a strength obtained in prayer, from the Word, through the sacraments.

¶ We sometimes fail to use this strength because we ignore the fact that it is there. In a book written by a doctor I read lately an account of a nervous patient who was tormented by his recurrent yielding to a temptation. 'Do you pray about it?' asked the doctor. 'Yes, indeed,' said the patient, 'I pray for hours at a time; I pray till I am exhausted, and then immediately I fall again.' 'But,' said the doctor, 'you need only ask once. When you have asked once, then you have the strength, and you need only give thanks for it and think no more of the matter.' I have since tried this plan, and have found that in certain difficulties it has an almost magical effect. The advice has good grounds, whether we think of it as based on theology or psychology or both.[1]

2. But, secondly, let it be ours to resist temptations at the beginning, when they first display themselves as such. This is the only wisdom. Then the temptation is comparatively weak, and we are strong. But if we let it grow, dally with it, entertain it ever so little, the positions will be reversed, and *it* will be strong, and we weak. Now it is a dwarf; do not wait to engage in a death-struggle with it till it has grown to be a giant. That memor-

[1] Helen Wodehouse, *God the Prisoner*, 126.

able fire which once laid London in ashes, which defied for days the efforts of thousands of men—there was no doubt a moment when a pitcher of water in the hands of a little child might have quenched it. So, too, the sin which has now grown to have such a fearful mastery over a man that it is the tyrant of his life, was once but a wandering temptation, a vague floating suggestion to evil, against which, if he had resolutely shut the door of his heart when it first presented itself for admission, he might perhaps never have heard of it again. That verse of the Psalmist has perplexed many, 'Blessed shall be he who taketh thy children, and dasheth them against the stones'; but it need perplex none as applied to the brood of Satan—sinful thoughts and sinful desires, which cannot be too early dashed against the stones of God's law. If David, on that occasion known too well, had made a covenant with his eyes, and withdrawn them at once, what a blurred and blotted page in his history might have been spared.

¶ In Mrs. George H. Morrison's recently published *Addresses for Women Workers* perhaps the best story is that of the lark who observed during his flight a small object moving slowly along one of the green paths of earth far beneath him.

'Being curious to know what it was, he descended until he was quite low and just over the slowly moving object. To his vast surprise he discovered that it was a tiny cart with a mouse drawing it, and another mouse walking alongside and waving a whip, while all the time it chanted, "Fresh worms for sale." Very much interested, the lark alighted on the path beside the little cart and asked the mouse how much the charge for the worms was. "Three worms for one feather from your wing," was the reply. The lark thought this was an excellent bargain, pulled out a feather from his wing, got his worms, which he enjoyed greatly, then spread his wings and rose again. But before he had soared very far the temptation to enjoy some more of the delicious morsels was too strong to be resisted, and alighting again, he bartered away two more precious feathers, then once again rose into the sunlit air.

Balance and wing-power were lost, and ere long the lark was found dead in the lovely garden where temptation had met and been too strong for him.[1]

Nearer to God.

Ja. iv. 8.—'Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you.'

There is a sense in which God cannot draw more 'nigh' to any man than He is already—the sense in which Paul proclaimed to the Athenians on Mars' Hill, that 'He is not far from any one of us, for in him we live and move and have our being.' The fact of the omnipresence of Deity lies at the foundation of all religion. Every church that lifts its spire into the heavens is built under the belief that wherever mankind assemble to worship the King Eternal, He will be there. Every oath in the law courts and before the police magistrates appeals to a present God. Every prayer is directed to One who hath 'searched us and known us.' Every petition for forgiveness is offered to Him 'who compasseth our path, and our lying down, and is acquainted with all our ways.' Every thanksgiving at meals is presented to a God who 'daily loadeth us with benefits.' And even every fiery curse issuing from the lips of blasphemy and malice derives its force as an imprecation from the presence of Him whose Spirit 'fills the earth and the heavens.'

And it is a true belief; for it is impossible to express by language the closeness of the relation existing between the Creator and the Creation. 'He upholdeth all things by the word of his power.' His power gives energy to every cause, to every force. This world, with every creature on it, is pervaded by the all-moving, all-surrounding, all-supporting Power. 'In his hand thy breath is, and his are all thy ways.' The structure, the movement, the government of the globe—the formation of man's body, both within and without

[1] P. 67.

—and the structure of the souls of men, with conscience in each as 'the candle of the Lord,' alike bear witness to the reality of that glorious Presence which is the Life of the universe.

'Draw nigh to God, he will draw nigh to you';
How sweet the promise, sweet and ever true.

Hast thou but eyes to see the vision fair
Of earth and sky? Behold his presence there.

Hast thou a heart to love? About thee press
Unnumbered hearts that need thy tenderness.

Thou canst not lose thy love; he waits to fill
The emptied heart and make it richer still.

Make him but room, he seeks to enter in,
To bring thee peace for pain and heal thy sin.

He loveth all; no longer fear and doubt;
His heart is wide, and none will be cast out.

Come then in trust and unto God draw nigh,
Live in his Life, and thou shalt never die.[1]

In what manner can we 'draw nigh to God,' so that He will 'draw nigh to us'? The answer is threefold. *First*, in the study and belief of His Revelation; *secondly*, in Prayer and Thanksgiving; *thirdly*, in the practice of Obedience.

1. We can draw near to God *in the study of His revelation*, and in that study He will draw near to us. We read in the Acts of the Apostles that the treasurer to Queen Candace, 'who had come to Jerusalem for to worship, was returning, and, sitting in his chariot, read the prophet Isaiah. Then the Spirit of God said unto Philip, go near and join thyself to this chariot. And Philip ran thither to him and opened his mouth, and beginning at the same scripture preached to him Jesus.' Truth concerning Jesus of Nazareth, His life, character, and death, His ascension, and second coming, is especially the truth in which God reveals Himself to mankind. And here is one striking example of the fact that God draws nigh to him who devotes himself to earnest examination of the Scriptures.

The condition of God's spiritual action in the souls of men is honest attention to truth. The use that a man makes of his power of attention fixes his position in this world, and no less determines his destiny. Still more true is it in relation to spiritual things that success depends on attenton. He who would 'know and understand God' must give his whole attention to God. The truths to be learned are spiritual; they are not to be understood simply by the reason; they require the exercise of the conscience and the affections.

To 'draw near to God, then, is to bring the mind into earnest contact with those writings which express His mind. In the world of Nature God is revealed as He was in the Holy Place of the Temple, in the Scripture He is revealed as He was in the Holiest of all. Thither of old none but the High Priest once a year might approach—but into this Holy Oracle of the New Testament revelation the humblest of men may go at all hours, and be welcome to communion with the King of Kings. 'I will meet with thee there' were the words in which access was permitted to Moses, but they express equally the reality of our own possible communion with God.

¶ At every turn in the city I pass those tiny rooms placed in the very midst of the turmoil and strife, with their strangely suggestive legend, 'You may telephone from here.' *From here!* I enter, and in a few moments am holding personal intercourse with the unseen. Long before modern scientific discovery made them possible, the reality they shadow forth was with trustful souls. The finger of God has always been writing the gracious message that every wayfaring man may read: 'You may commune from here.'[1]

2. This promise will be fulfilled *in prayer*. Not as of old in the sphere of sense, when 'Moses spake, and God answered him by a

[1] W. G. Tarrant, *Songs Devout*, 27.

[1] Carey Bonner, *Up to the Hills*, 22.

voice.' Yet we will not think that on this account it is less real than if visions and voices responded to our petitions. The thought and feeling which is conveyed by language, even among ourselves, is not the deepest. The clearest perceptions of truth, of beauty, and of holiness are beyond the power of words fully to express. There are things which 'it is not possible for man to utter.' The innermost relations of soul to soul may pass in silence.

In the same manner, a quiet secrecy marks God's revelations to men. Christ, when on earth, did not cause His voice to be heard in the streets, neither will He from heaven. He does not vocally converse with the millions of His worshippers. But He does what is greater, He diffuses over the soul a spiritual sense of His presence, and fills it with thoughts and emotions which cause it to declare, like Jacob, 'This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven!' There is no intercourse so real as that of mind with mind and heart with heart: and such communion with God is granted to those who approach Him through His Son. He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. 'Enter into thy closet, and pray to thy Father who seeth in secret, and thy Father who seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.'

My prayer hath power with God, the grace
  Unspeakable I now receive.
Through faith I see Thee face to face,
  I see Thee face to face, and live!
In vain I have not wept and strove,
  Thy nature and thy name is Love.

3. The promise is fulfilled *in the practice of obedience*. Men are alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them. God becomes a foreigner and the greatest stranger in His own world. Souls are filled with the God-dispelling principle of rebellion. They do not wish to recognize His presence in their duties, and as a punishment they become unable to recognize it in their woes. An atheistic atmosphere envelops them. The moral faculty, which by its independence of the will proves both a Divine power and a Divine government, is systematically set at defiance; Nature and revelation shine upon them in vain. They are without God in the world.

But when the soul has approached the Saviour, and, like the woman in the crowd, touched the hem of His robe, it receives also into itself the principle of a loving and healthful obedience which brings it into conscious union with the Most High. In every effort at compliance with the Spirit of God the soul brings itself into *direct contact* with Him. It abides under the shadow of the Almighty. 'Thou meetest him that worketh righteousness.' By inspired goodness we are united to the Fountain of goodness. By all endeavours after spirituality, by all sincere struggles to escape from the thraldom of sensual appetites and malignant passions we rise into the sphere where the light of God's presence shines.

In every effort towards the discharge of daily duty in the spirit of faithfulness and affection God feels an interest so real that He makes Himself known as He does not unto the world. For although imperfect beings are frequently impatient with imperfection, the Perfect Being affectionately appreciates the incomplete labours and endeavours of His sons and daughters. 'She hath done what she could' is but the preparation for 'Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord!'

In works of love to man we can draw near to God, and He will draw near to us. There is no dark court or alley where our benevolence may lead us to visit and relieve the fatherless or the widow, the sick or the sorrowful, but there an Eye follows us. He Himself becomes the Comforter chiefly by raising up comforters to the miserable from among their fellow-creatures. The actively loving soul is the organ of the Unseen Affection; and we cannot think that the agent of the Eternal Sympathy will be allowed to remain wholly unconscious of the companion Power which impels him.

¶ In his recently published lectures on preaching Mr. Gossip gives candidates for the ministry this little glimpse into his own experi-

ence. Speaking of pastoral visitation he says: 'Yours is to be an interesting life. You are to move about among a people as Christ's representative, with endless little opportunities of helpfulness made for you, your presence often welcomed as a proof that God has not forgotten. That, in itself, is a wonderful thing. I remember one day visiting in Glasgow. Ah! those cruel Glasgow stairs! . . . One day visiting, I turned in dog-tired about ten at night to yet another stair, but I paused at the foot, and "I will go to-morrow," I determined, and was turning back when Someone passed me, and went up. And I knew who it was! Yes! Yes! quite so, not a doubt of it! Just tired nerves, as you say. But I knew who it was, heard Him say, "Well, if you won't go, then I must go Myself"; saw indeed only a dim greyness of mounting shoulders, dreadfully tired shoulders. But I knew Who it was, flushed to my soul, and ran up after Him, and Christ and I went in together. And for a while that kept it in my mind that we are meant to bring Christ with us when we visit, to make people have the happy feeling that He, too, is there—for a while, for a while!'[1]

God's Need of Man.

Ja. iv. 8.—'Draw nigh to God and he will draw nigh to you.'

THESE words contain a great truth. It is that God needs us. He calls us to Himself because He wants something from us. He knows that each of us has something that we can give to Him. There are few things in life that make us feel so small as the thought that nobody needs us. On the contrary, there are few things that add such dignity to life as the knowledge that there are some people to whom we are necessary—a parent, or brother, or sister, or friend, to whom, if we were taken, life would never appear the same again. How much more inspiring is the thought that we are actually needed by God!

1. God needs us because He has a work in life for us to do. To some of us that may seem very strange. We are accustomed to think of God's work in the world as being done by preachers and ministers and Sunday school teachers. It may never have occurred to us that there are some tasks in life for which God is looking to us. All our days we may have been watching the age-long struggle between right and wrong as mere spectators without having once felt that we have a part of our own to play in the struggle. Yet there is not one of us of whom that is not true.

We do not need to hear some supernatural voice from Heaven. God's call comes to a man when he sees some task which needs to be done, and realizes that he can help to carry it through. And sooner or later that call comes to every one of us. There is a task which we each have to accomplish. We are not where we are by accident. Our life is big with significance for others. There is something that we can do for our fellows that nobody else in this universe can do, some task that not even the wisest and the best of our fellows can carry through. It is our task. The world is waiting for us. God has a task in life for each of us to do, and He needs us.

2. But that is not all. God needs us not only for the sake of our fellow-men, that we may contribute something to their advancement and happiness, but also for His own sake He needs us. That is a most amazing thing. God so mighty, so wise, so holy—we so weak, so foolish, so sinful. And yet God cannot be satisfied without our love. It sounds too stupendous to be true. But Jesus was always telling us this. A certain man had a hundred sheep, and one of them went astray. At once the shepherd missed it. He knew the difference between ninety-nine and one hundred. So wise and tender was his interest in that one sheep that he toiled over steep hills and through dark valleys until he found it again. And that is what God is like, said Jesus. God does not lose you and me in the vast multitude of human beings; He knows us one by one, and if we wander from Him He

[1] *In Christ's Stead*, 39.

misses us and seeks to bring us back again to His love. That is the supreme dignity of our life—that we make a difference to God.

3. 'Draw nigh to God and he will draw nigh to you.' This means that God has something to give as well as something to receive. In other words, if God needs us, we also need God. The trouble is that while we were meant, as we have been saying, to love God and to love our fellow-men, there is an influence in our life which fights against that purpose. This influence of sin is the most serious fact with which we ever have to deal, and the reason why we cannot exaggerate its seriousness is that when a man once puts himself under its power it gradually destroys and shatters his higher self.

¶ I read some time ago of a certain grove of trees in Africa, the luxuriant foliage of which tempts the traveller to pause and rest beneath its shadow. But if he yields to the allurement and allows himself to fall asleep there he never wakes up again. Those trees, attractive though they appear to be, give forth a subtle poison which little by little robs a man of his life. In the same way sin appears to be attractive. But if a man once puts himself within its power there issues from it a deadly influence which step by step robs a man of his true life. When Nero the emperor, as a young man, had to sign his first death warrant, he was so overwhelmed by the solemnity of the thought of taking another man's life that he wished he had never learned how to write his name. Later he murdered thousands of people, including his own mother and brother, without flinching. That is how sin works when it once gets a hold on a man's life. It actually destroys his finer susceptibilities until his true self is killed.

Can we trace any such process in our lives? Are we as sensitive to sin to-day as we once were? Do we find when we look into our own hearts that our attitude to sin now is what it was, say, three, or five, or ten years ago? When we find ourselves guilty of such sins are we as shocked, are we as grieved as we should once have been? If not, it means that sin is doing its work of destruction in our lives; that little by little it is obliterating our better and higher life. We cannot conquer sin in our own strength. We have tried sometimes, and we know our failure; but God says to men that if only they will yield themselves to His service He will forgive them their sins, and He will give them that power in which they will be able to conquer the sin which, up to now, has been mastering them. That is what God can do for men, and that is why we need God.

We need God; God needs us. Let us ask from Him all that He can give to us, and gladly render to Him all that we can give to Him—our utmost love, and our utmost service. 'Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you.' [1]

Censoriousness.

Ja. iv. 11.—'Speak not evil one of another, brethren' (RV 'Speak not one against another').

James does not condemn all judging. Even when Jesus said 'Judge not, that ye be not judged,' He meant to warn us not against judging of any kind, but against evil judging, as the context shows.

Both our Lord's admonition and James's are to be interpreted according to their spirit. Neither condemns all judging; neither forbids us ever to find fault. That may sometimes be an essential part of our duty. God has implanted within us the critical faculty, and every day we are called on to form judgments on persons and things, moral judgments on our own conduct, on what is true and what is false in ourselves and in others. 'Prove all things,' Paul says; 'hold fast that which is good.' 'Believe not every spirit,' says John, 'but try the spirits whether they are of God.' If we look to the example of Christ, no one is severer than He in discriminating judgment when the occasion requires it.

1. What James condemns, then, is judgment that is censorious, uncharitable, mean, and

[1] H. Bisseker.

small; that carping spirit of criticism and faultfinding which is at once irritating in itself and the mark of a little soul. There are some people who have a keen eye for the failings of others, while blind as bats to the virtues and beauties of their character. This peculiar insight is not to be coveted, for it consists only in the detection of defects, it fixes on blemishes, it sees but the weak points. The kind of person James means is well known to everybody. For example, there are those who can never feel any genuine admiration for a great man, or, if they feel it, they never allow themselves to express it. Let someone of whose good deeds and qualities the world is speaking be praised in their presence, and they cannot resist the temptation to say something depreciatory, suggesting perhaps that he is conceited, or that he is fond of being made of. They must always have something to put in the other scale to keep the balance even, as if unstinted praise of another were an injury to themselves. They seem possessed with a cynical spirit of detraction. What interests them in other people is the faults and imperfections they may find in them. They are jealous lest others should get credit for more than they ought, and they constitute themselves judges—ill-natured judges, prejudiced judges—and find fault with everybody.

¶ Another serious weakness, which is shown to us by the way in which the life of Spencer has been officially told, is the philosopher's lack of hearty appreciation of the merits and work of other public men. Tennyson he scorned as being 'disgraced' and 'mean' for continuing to draw his State pension when he no longer needed it. Stevenson fell under his disgust because of the way he treated his donkey as shown in his 'Travels with a Donkey in the Cevennes.' Lord Kelvin he declared had 'furnished repeated illustrations' of not knowing how to reason in 'contingent matters.' He continually omits 'some of the factors.' Of the homage paid to Darwin for his great services in enunciating and applying the principle of Evolution, he grumbled that although he (Spencer) had been beforehand in calling attention to the same principle, yet 'he had got all the kicks and others the halfpence.' This is the nature of the feeling which runs through all Spencer's attitude and utterances respecting the great men of his time. There is not in all the 621 pages of his biography a bit of glowing praise for any one of his compeers in Science, or Art, or Poetry, or Politics. He eulogised his own agents and some of his worshippers, when they pleased him. But his recognition of the work done by men of his own measure and importance was cold and feeble.[1]

2. We should remember that those we speak evil of, or judge, are our brethren, and that such conduct, to say the least, is unbrotherly. It is inconsistent with the recognition of the brotherhood of mankind, and still more so with that higher relation of brotherhood which makes believers one in Christ. It is somewhat remarkable that in this paragraph James abruptly changes his stern style of address, and uses the word 'brother' three times in one verse, as if the word itself were an indirect reproof of unbrotherly conduct. Nothing is more unbrotherly than faultfinding and want of appreciation. It is a direct violation of all that intimacy and loving consideration for others which lie at the very root of the idea of brotherhood. That a man should judge his brother, condemn his brother, set himself above one whose very name implies that he is on the same level, is an offence against the very nature of things, against the constituted rights of human relationships. 'Sirs,' said Moses to the two Hebrews whom he caught fighting, 'sirs, ye are brethren; why do ye wrong one to another?' Your interests are the same: what is gain to the one is gain to the other; you belong to the same family; you owe each other only love, sympathy, well-doing, and deepest concern each for the other's welfare. So, if ever we are tempted to be censorious, and never, as the saying is, have a good word for anybody, let us reflect that we are wronging our brethren, that our conduct is un-

[1] Henry Lewis, *Modern Rationalism*, 231.

brotherly, an offence against the law of the common brotherhood of mankind.

3. James adds that 'he that speaketh against a brother, or judgeth his brother, speaketh against the law, and judgeth the law.' The law to which reference is made is the law of God, the moral law, what James has already spoken of as 'the perfect law,' 'the law of liberty,' 'the royal law,' which says 'thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.' James contends that evil speaking and evil judging are breaches of the law of charity; they are practical condemnations of this law. The detractor of his brother virtually condemns the New Testament ethics as unsound, and pronounces its moral standards unworthy of obedience. He sets up his own opinion against God's, shows himself contemptuous towards the law of charity, and acts as if he were in possession of some higher principle by which he tests it and finds it wanting. The royal law teaches otherwise. Instead of making the worst of our brethren, it teaches us to follow the Divine example and make the best of them. God is not critical. He is kind towards the unthankful and the evil. 'Be ye merciful, even as your Father is merciful.' Our Lord was not critical. He saw the good in the very worst. He strove to bring out whatever in human nature was best, and threw Himself again and again in faith upon such as Zacchæus and the woman who was a sinner, believing that the good in them needed only to be awakened by love and sympathy to become the strongest power in their lives. If we have learned of Christ, we shall try to make the best of people rather than the worst of them.

¶ When we visit an exhibition of Raeburn's portraits and look at the people on the walls, more lifelike than some we left in the streets, we know quite well that those delightful persons could not all and always have been full of the milk of human kindness, of shrewdness and of humour, as Raeburn painted them. The artist's personality charmed their best to the surface.[1]

[1] *Lord Guthrie*, 260.

4. Finally, James tells us that in speaking evil of and judging others, we are putting ourselves completely out of our proper place. We usurp the functions of the 'One Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy: who art thou that judgest another?' It is not only unbrotherly, it is not only an offence against the law of charity, it is ridiculous and wicked presumption. It is to put ourselves into God's judgment seat. 'Who art thou that judgest?' James means that even if it were not wrong to judge, and we were allowed full scope for the exercise of this faculty, what would our judgment be worth? What are our judgments worth as a matter of fact?

(1) In the first place, they must nearly always be quite wrong, and that for many reasons. In order to deliver a sound judgment, we must know all the facts, and the influence of each must be duly weighed. What do we really know about each other, or of those component elements in our nature that go to the making of our moral actions? How are we able so to assign each several influence its due force as to determine whether an action is good or bad, or how good and how bad? How much are we to deduct for the weaknesses and positive tendencies to certain evils a man may have inherited from his ancestry? How much are we to allow for disadvantages of upbringing, for deficiencies in education, in opportunity? How much for home influence, and the kind of books within reach? Or, on the other hand, what are we to add for the corresponding advantages which make moral failure all the more blameworthy? The son of a long line of godly ancestors, whose moral wealth has accumulated with every generation, cannot be judged by the same standard as the son, say, of some criminal at the other end of the scale. The one entered on his inheritance with the best advantages that piety and love of friends could give him; the other had no inheritance but shame. Can sin be the same in the one as in the other? There are a thousand questions to settle and balance here, and they can be understood by none except Him in whose Divine consciousness the differences between each individual of the millions who have ever

lived have all been reflected and recorded. But 'who art thou that judgest another?' How is it possible for us to judge our fellow-men? Is it not the height of presumption? Is there not One only who is fit to judge? What sinful presumption, then, is it on our part to assume His Divine prerogative! Burns wrote truly when he said:

Who made the heart, 'tis He alone
Decidedly can try us;
He knows each chord, its various tone,
Each spring, its various bias:
Then at the balance let's be mute,
We never can adjust it;
What's done we partly may compute,
But know not what's resisted.

(2) But again, even though the facts were fairly before us, we should be biassed judges. We do not, of course, speak of judicial decisions in a court of law or in the Church, but of our hasty, ill-formed judgments of our brethren, judgments we do not take time to consider, but which we are all more or less guilty of forming. In regard to these we lack not only knowledge, but fair-mindedness. Not that we are consciously unfair, but that we are misled by our own sin and self-esteem, and by familiarity with our own ways of looking at things. There are a great many of our shortcomings we never see, and a great many more with which we deal too leniently. We see the mote in our brother's eye, but never the beam in our own. We see the stoop of another man's back, but never the hump on our own. Or, like the hunch-backed people in the Indian legend, we have got so used to our deformities that the absence of them in others appears to our eyes to be a defect. Who are we then that we should set ourselves up as judges of our brethren? It is impossible for us so to enter into another's history and motives and thoughts that our judgment can be of any value. One only is Judge.[1]

¶ The tempter is extraordinarily ingenious and resourceful. When he cannot spoil a life one way, he manages to do it another. Some he ruins by their selfishness; they will think of no one save themselves. When, however, he finds folk who insist on thinking of other people, he changes his tactics. He makes them think about other people all the time, worry about other people, assume responsibility for other people, meddle with other people, until at last these victims of his wiles reach the estate which Jesus pictured—a man with a beam in his own eye, trying with laborious unselfishness to get a mote out of his brother's eye.

Sir George Mellish was one of the great jurists of England. As a member of committee appointed to draw up resolutions of congratulation to the Queen, he discovered that his colleagues had begun one resolution with the words 'Being conscious as we are of our own defects.'

'No, no,' said Judge Mellish, 'that will never do. We must not lie to Her Majesty. Change it to "Being conscious as we are of one another's defects!"'[1]

Judge not; the workings of his brain
And of his heart thou canst not see;
What looks to thy dim eyes a stain,
In God's pure light may only be
A scar, brought from some well-won field,
Where thou wouldst only faint and yield.

The look, the air, that frets thy sight,
May be a token, that below
The soul has closed in deadly fight
With some infernal fiery foe,
Whose glance would scorch thy smiling grace,
And cast thee shuddering on thy face!

The fall thou darest to despise—
May be the angel's slackened hand
Has suffered it, that he may rise
And take a firmer, surer stand;
Or, trusting less to earthly things,
May henceforth learn to use his wings.

And judge none lost; but wait, and see,
With hopeful pity, not disdain;
The depth of the abyss may be
The measure of the height of pain
And love and glory that may raise
This soul to God in after days![2]

[1] D. Fairweather, *Bound in the Spirit*, 139ff.

[1] H. E. Fosdick, *Twelve Tests of Character*, 93.
[2] Adelaide Anne Proctor.

To-Morrow.

(Christmas).

Ja. iv. 14.—'Ye know not what shall be on the morrow.'

THESE words sound a note of solemn warning. But there are two ways of looking at to-morrow.

1. Sometimes it has turned a man's thoughts to sadness and has given to his eloquence the muffled roll of funeral drums. Sometimes it has touched his spirit with the recklessness of despair: 'Let us eat and drink for to-morrow we die.' The wine-cup and the voluptuary's pleasures have found their apologia in the uncertainty of the future. Fitz-Gerald's 'Omar' chants:

Ah, my beloved, fill the cup that clears
To-day of past regrets and future fears;
To-morrow!—why, to-morrow I may be
Myself with yesterday's seven thousand years.

The thought of the ancient world is nearly always sad as it looks forward. A poem like Browning's *Cleon*, with its fine thought and no less splendid diction, well reflects the depression that might weigh even upon noble minds. The moralist, trying to rouse the careless and to turn the perverse, has used to-morrow like some great bell on which to strike a note of warning. And for many people, even apart from that touch of conscience which makes cowards of us all, the uncertainty of the future wears an aspect of fear and foreboding, of dread rather than of anticipation. They do not hold the possibilities of to-morrow in anything like an even balance. That anything may happen to-morrow, confesses more often a forecast of hindrance and difficulty than of help and benediction. They foresee more readily the assault of time upon what they have than its possible argosies of things not seen as yet. They realize what it may take away more vividly than what it may bring. Perhaps it is death, the one certainty of the morrow for every man, that has thus shadowed all its prospects, and set so stern and minatory a tone in these words of James.

Nor is the fear of change the only form of dread with which the future assaults our hearts. There are many who in the monotony and dreariness of to-day fear that to-morrow will bring no change, that it will simply renew the trivial round and common task.

To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,
Creeps in this weary pace from day to day
To the last syllable of recorded time.

They say, not with the boldness of one making plans, but rather with a dull acceptance of life's routine, 'To-morrow we shall go into such a city and buy and sell, buy and sell, as we have done in so many yesterdays.' Surely the prospect is very depressing, and the subject of our meditation cheerless!

2. But there is possible a different reading of all this. Let us set this word in the light of one to-morrow which may teach us that the attitude of suspicion and dread towards the future is not for Christian souls. Let us try to understand how a Christian poet can sing very differently from that Persian singer we have quoted,

I know not what the future hath
Of marvel or surprise,
Assured alone that life and death
His mercy underlies,

says Whittier.

(1) Laurence Housman, in a little Nativity play, has put into the mouth of one of the shepherds watching his flocks on the hill above Bethlehem the song,

The world is old to-night,
The world is old,
The stars around the fold
Do show their light, do show their light,
And so they did and so
A thousand years ago,
And so they will, dear love, when you lie cold.

That was the bitter truth before Christ came—the world was old. There was no faith

in to-morrow morning, no possibility but that it would find the world a day older and so much poorer. The nations had spent their strength, grey hairs were upon them. Judæa, the mother of mighty prophets with a living truth upon their tongues, her inspiration was gone. Search and see, there ariseth no more a prophet! The Pharisee, the scribe, and the priest, were all that remained. Greece, the nurse of great wranglers scaling the heights and plumbing the depths of thought, for her there was no more divine philosophy. It had run out in scepticism and nihilism, and the boldest might feel

The horror quickening still from year to year,
The consummation coming past escape,
When I shall know most and yet least enjoy,
When all my works wherein I prove my worth,
Being present still to mock me in men's mouths,
I, I the feeling, thinking, acting man,
The man who loved his life so over much
Sleep in my urn.

We have to go back and stand at that point in history to understand what moral and spiritual night, what vital bankruptcy, are like. All the to-morrows would be as to-day! To-morrow we will go into such a city, and buy and sell, and get gain, and die, and be buried and forgotten.

(2) And then came God's surprise to the bankrupt life of man. To-morrow Jesus Christ was born. 'Ye know not what shall be on the morrow,' instead of being a sinister and dread fact, was really the one note of hope for a weary world. The day before Christ was born, to-morrow meant everything to the lives of men. God's wonderful to-morrow! so wonderful that history began again as from the year one; so wonderful that from its cradle there has come the impetus and power of the modern centuries. God's wonderful to-morrow! which turned the shadow of night into morning, and made all things new.

Think how it fired the imagination of the early Christians. They are as excited and keen as children speculating on the possibilities of Christmas morning. 'Beloved, now are we the children of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be.' 'Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him.' 'I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed.' That to-morrow has literally turned the world's head. It used to look back for its glories to a garden of Eden, to a golden age, to a lost Atlantis,—now it looks forward. The Christian faith is in a God who was and is, and is to come, the Everlasting. There is always something to live for while man has to-morrow with God in it.

3. These are not idle words. That one to-morrow which brought Jesus Christ has not only set a kind of breathless possibility of good in all to-morrows. It has not simply corrected a bias on the other side. It does not merely say, 'It is just as likely that good may come as evil. There is as much reason to hope as to fear. There is an even chance between good and bad fortune. It is as possible that you will be helped as that you will be hindered, that the unforeseen may be a blessing, as that it will be disaster.' That were only to tell us that, though we had been calculating the hazards too unfavourably, life was still a game of chance. It were to assure us that the dice were not loaded, but that fortune still hung upon a cast of the dice for all that. What Christian faith has done for those who trust it is to deny the adverse hazard altogether. Paul breasts the situation strongly and creates a fresh vision of life when he cries, 'All things work together for good to them that love God.' To the older world unimaginable possibilities of gloom lay in to-morrow. To the Christian the only unimaginable possibilities of to-morrow are those of good. He knows the worst that to-morrow may bring, it is only the best he does not know.

That is where the gulf lies between the old Pagan and the Christian poets we have quoted Listen to them again:—

To-morrow! Why, to-morrow I may be
Myself with yesterday's seven thousand years.

sings Omar.

I know not what the future hath
Of marvel or surprise,
Assured alone that life and death
His mercy underlies.
I know not where His islands lift
Their fronded palms in air;
I only know I cannot drift
Beyond His love and care.

sings Whittier. 'It doth not yet appear what we shall be'—that way life is boundless.[1]

Metaphors for Life.

(New Year).

Ja. iv. 14.—'What is your life?'

There lie scattered throughout the Bible no fewer than *eighteen* answers to the question, 'What is your life?' And anyone who has not before gathered them together cannot but be surprised at the singular beauty and appropriateness of the collection. Let us run over them. 'What is your life?' It is

A tale that is told.	Nothing.
A pilgrimage.	A sleep.
A swift post.	A vapour.
A swift ship.	A shadow.
A handbreadth.	A flower.
A shepherd's tent removed.	A weaver's shuttle.
A thread cut by the weaver.	Water spilt on the ground.
A dream.	Grass.
	Wind.

Generally speaking, the first thing to strike one about these images is that they are all quick things—there is a suggestion of brevity and evanescence about them, and this feeling is so strong that we might fancy there was only one answer to the question, What is your life? namely, Our life is *short*. But if we look closer at them for a moment, shades of difference will begin to appear, and we shall find the hints of other meanings as great and striking, and quite as necessary to complete the conception of 'our life.'

1. First of all, then, and most in detail, three of these metaphors give this answer: *Our life is a very little thing.* We all admit that life is a very great thing. It is also a very little thing. Measure it by its bearing on eternity; there is no image in God's universe to compare with it for majesty and dignity. It is a sublime thing—Life. But measure it by its bearings upon time, by its results on the world, on other lives; there is no image too small to speak of its meanness and narrowness, for it is a little thing, 'Your life.' It is 'a shadow,' it is 'a shepherd's tent removed,' it is 'a tale that is told.'

(1) *A shadow.*—It is unreal; it is illusory. It falls across the world without affecting it; perhaps it only darkens it. Then it rises suddenly, and is gone. It leaves few impressions; and if it could, shadow cannot act much on other shadows. So life, at the best, is a poor, resultless, shadowy thing.

(2) *A shepherd's tent removed.*—Just before sunset the slopes of the Eastern hills would be dotted with Arab tents. And when night fell, the traveller in these lands, as he lay down to rest, would see the glimmering of their fires and hear the noisy bleating of their flocks. But in the morning, when he looked out, both herds and herdsmen would be gone. Hours ago, perhaps, the tents had been struck, and the hills would be silent and lonely, as if no foot had ever stirred the dew on their slopes. So man, the Bible says, is here to-day, in the noise of the world's labour; to-morrow, when you look for him, he is gone. Through the night sometime his frail tent has been struck, and his place is empty and still. His life has left no track to tell that it was there—except a burnt-out fire to show that there a shepherd's tent had been pitched.

(3) *A tale that is told.*—Some think this means a thought or meditation. 'Your life is a meditation,' as the margin has it. But as the Psalm in which the words occur may have

[1] W. C. Piggott, *The Imperishable Word*, 202ff.

reference to the wanderings of the children of Israel, it is probable that the obvious meaning of the words is the correct one. In their journeyings the children of Israel would have many weary, unoccupied hours. There would be no books to relieve the monotony, and no doubt the people would attempt to beguile the tedious marches and the long hours by the camp fires at night, with the familiar Oriental custom of narrating personal adventures in the form of stories or tales. Night after night, as this went on, the different tales of the story-tellers would begin to get mixed, then to confuse their audience, then even to weary them. The first tale, which made a great impression once, would lose its power, and the second, which was thought more wonderful still, would be distanced by the third. Then the third would be forgotten, and the fourth and the fifth; till *all* would be forgotten, and last night's tale would be the vivid picture in every mind to-day. But the story-teller would know that to-night another would have his turn, and sit in the place of honour, and tell a more vivid tale than he had told the night before, and his would be forgotten and ignored.

So do we spend our years as a tale that is told. The dead have told their tales; they have said their say. They thought we would remember what they did and said. But, no; they are forgotten. They have become old stories now. And our turn will come—our turn to stop; our turn for the Angel of Death to close the story of our life and write the universal 'Finis' at the end. What though a sentence here and there may linger for a few brief years to find a place—without quotation marks—in some tale better told, the tale itself must close and be forgotten.

2. There is another set of metaphors which bring out the more common answer that *Life is a short thing*. Shortness, of course, is different from littleness. A lightning flash is short, but not little. But life is both short and little. And there are two ways in which life is short: (1) measured by growth; (2) measured by minutes. Those who are growing most feel time shortest. They have started to fashion themselves into men, and life is all too short to do it in. Therefore they work out their salvation with fear and trembling—fearful lest death should come, trembling lest life should stop before it is worked out. But they who measure life by its minutes have nothing to say of its brevity; for their purpose it is long enough. It is not more time they want, but 'the more capacious soul,' as someone says, 'to flow through every pore of the little that they have.' But there is no distinction in the Bible treatment of the two. Time is the same to all. It is a *handbreadth;* a weaver's shuttle; nothing, an eagle hasting to the prey; a swift post; a swift ship. David used to pray to God to give him a measure for his days. Well, he got it. It was the breadth of his hand. We carry about with us continually the measure of our days. 'My days are as an handbreadth.'

The others are familiar symbols enough. The weaver's shuttle—is it the monotony, the sameness, the constant repetition of life? Rather the quickness, the rapid flight through the thin web of time.

Then those in early times could know nothing more rapid or sudden than the swoop of an eagle on its prey; nothing more fleet than the swift sailing away of a ship driven by the unseen wind; or the hasty arrival of the 'swift post' or messenger with tidings from afar. And it was not for want of opportunity if they did not learn their lessons well in those simple days, when the few changes life had were each thus stamped with the thought of the great change into eternity.

¶ Consider the shortness of man's life in comparison with many of the works of his own hands. Even a soundly made article of furniture will serve generation after generation of the same family and will continue to fulfil its purpose long after the maker has passed away. We take down from our shelves books which were written, printed, and bound two or three centuries ago, and as we handle them we feel how long is their life compared with our own. Men who here on earth make so short a stay erect vast cathedrals which stand for hundreds of years, gathering within their

sacred walls generation after generation of devout worshippers. The life of the great artists is short, indeed, as compared with the life of that which they create. Shakespeare's plays are fresh after three centuries, but the author's life only lasted for fifty-two years. The paintings of Raphael utter their message of beauty and breathe forth their inspiration through the centuries, but the artist himself died at the age of thirty-seven.[1]

3. The next thought is so closely allied to this that one can scarcely separate it but for convenience. It suggests the idea of *transitoriness*. Life is a transitory thing. It is a thing of change. There is no endurance in it, no settling down in it, no real home for it here. Therefore God calls it *a pilgrimage*—a passing on to a something that is to be. Closely allied to this, too, is the simile of the text—that life is *a vapour*. It means there is no real substance in it. It is a going and coming for a moment, then a passing away for ever. And then there are two or three metaphors which advance this idea still further. In their hands life passes from transitoriness into mystery. This life of ours, they show us, is *a mysterious* thing. And it is true, life is a mysterious thing. We do not understand life—why it should begin, why it should end. There is some meaning in it somewhere that has baffled every search; some meaning beyond, some more real state than itself. So no book but the Bible could have called our life a *sleep*. The great book of the Greeks has called death a sleep—

Death's twin-brother, Sleep.

But the Bible has the profounder thought. Life is the sleep. Death is the waking. And the great poets and philosophers of the world since have found no deeper thought of life than this; and the greatest of them all has used the very word—'our little life is rounded with a sleep.' It seems to have been a soothing thought to them, and it may be a sanctifying thought to us, that this life is not the end; and therefore it is a wise thing to turn round sometimes in our sleep, and think how there is more beyond than dreams.

¶ I think of death as the first pulse of the new strength shaking itself free from the old mouldy remnants of earth-garments, that it may begin in freedom the new life that grows out of the old. The caterpillar dies into the butterfly.[1]

If he sleep he shall do well;
  One day we shall also sleep,
Hands for long rest folded quiet,
  Sealed eyes that shall never weep.

If he sleep he shall do well,
  For he sleeps to wake again,
Past the doubting, past the dreaming,
  Past the fearing, past the pain.

Well to sleep, but best to waken,
  With the surcrease from the strife;
Then smooth-browed, bright-eyed, and rested,
  Rise to wonder, love and life.[2]

4. Life is *an irrevocable thing*. We have just finished a year. As we look back upon it, every thought and word and act of it is there in its place, just as we left it. There are all the Sabbaths in their places, and all the well-spent days or ill-spent days between. There is every sin and every wish and every look still in its own exact surroundings, each under its own day of the month, at the precise moment it happened. No single hour of it can be changed now, no smallest wish can be recalled, no angry word taken back. It is fixed, steadfast, irrevocable—stereotyped for ever on the plates of eternity. Our Book has a wonderful metaphor for this—'water spilt upon the ground, which cannot be gathered up again.' No; we cannot gather up these days and put them back into Time's urn, and live them over again. They are spilt upon the ground, and the great stream of Time has sucked them up, and cast them already on the eternal shores among all bygone years. The New Year is to be a time of resolution, is it?

[1] James Colville.

[1] George MacDonald, *David Elginbrod*, iii. 136.
[2] W. Robertson Nicoll.

Well, let this resolution take the foremost place of all, that, when this day of next year comes, and we look once more at the irrevocable past, there shall be fewer things to wish undone, or words to wish unsaid; more spots where memory shall love to linger, more steps which, when retraced in thought, will fill the heart with praise.

¶ We cling to the specious untruth that we can begin over and over again in this world, forgetting that while our sorrow and repentance bring sacramental gifts of grace and strength, God Himself cannot, by His own limitation, rewrite the Past. We are in our sorrow that which we have made ourselves in our sin; our temptations are there as well as the way of escape. We are in the image of God. We create our world, our undying selves, our heaven or our hell. "*Qui creavit te sine te non salvabit te sine te.*' It is stupendous, magnificent, and most appalling.[1]

5. Lastly: life is more than an irrevocable thing, it is *an uncertain thing*. What means the grim image in the Bible of the weaver's thread suspended in the air, and the blade of the lifted knife just touching it with its edge? It means that we must die. The thread of our life is to be cut. The knife may be lifted now, the keen blade just touching it; one pressure of the hand, and it is done. One half, left unfinished, still hanging to the past—the other, dropped noiselessly into eternity. Oh, life is an abruptly closing thing! Is it not as grass? In the morning, it groweth up and flourisheth; in the evening, it is cut down and withereth. Is your life ready for the swiftly falling knife, for the Reaper who stands at your door? Have you heard that there is another life—a life which cannot die, a life which, linked to your life, will make the past still bright with pardon and the future rich with hope? This life is in God's Son.[2]

¶ General Guiney was at his desk, in his usual cheery poor health, with daffodils in a glass before him, and Shakespeare's smiling salute to them upon his lips, on the afternoon of March 21, 1877. In an hour afterwards he was dead.

Crossing the square toward his house, he had sudden warning, by a slight spurt of blood to the lips. He took off his hat and knelt down by a tree: his loyal and instinctive way of meeting his Lord. A child playing near, who knew him, was the first to reach his side; but already he was no more.[1]

For now no ill can come to me!
No ill can come! For should it be
  Even the end and Death,
Nor Death nor Life can wreak me ill,
  And even as we sink—
He who is I, and I who am He—
  With the last breath
My thirsting soul shall drink,
  Shall drink its fill.[2]

[1] Michael Fairless, *The Roadmender*, 80.
[2] H. Drummond, *The Ideal Life*, 247ff.

[1] *Louise Imogen Guiney*, 21.
[2] Malcolm Taylor, *Poems*, 20.

Life A Vapour.

Ja. iv. 14.—'What is your life? It is even a vapour.'

I SUPPOSE few people reach the middle or latter period of their age, without having, at some moment of change or disappointment, felt the truth of those bitter words; and been startled by the fading of the sunshine from the cloud of their life into the sudden agony of the knowledge that the fabric of it was as fragile as a dream, and the endurance of it as transient as the dew. But it is not always that, even at such times of melancholy surprise, we can enter into any true perception that this human life shares in the nature of it, not only the evanescence, but the mystery of the cloud; that its avenues are wreathed in darkness, and its forms and courses no less fantastic, than spectral and obscure; so that not only in the vanity which we cannot grasp, but in the shadow which we cannot pierce, it is true of this cloudy life of ours, that 'man walketh in a vain shadow, and disquieteth himself in vain.'

And least of all, whatever may have been the eagerness of our passions, or the height

of our pride, are we able to understand in its depth the third and most solemn character in which our life is like those clouds of heaven; that to it belongs not only their transience, not only their mystery, but also their power; that in the cloud of the human soul there is a fire stronger than the lightning, and a grace more precious than the rain; and that though of the good and evil it shall one day be said alike, that the place that knew them knows them no more, there is an infinite separation between those whose brief presence had there been a blessing, like the mist of Eden that went up from the earth to water the garden, and those whose place knew them only as a drifting and changeful shade, of whom the heavenly sentence is, that they are 'wells without water; clouds that are carried with a tempest, to whom the mist of darkness is reserved for ever.'[1]

Life is what we make it, accordingly as we live to the 'outer man' which 'perisheth,' or to 'the inward man' which 'is renewed day by day.'

1. Life is a vapour, says James. A vapour—yet a vapour may be a thing of glory or of gloom. A vapour is often an object of glory, of richest glory. Ruskin complains: 'It is a strange thing how little in general people know about the sky.' People in general may know more about the sky than art critics suppose. Akenside's rustic, charmed with the sunset's scarlet stain, is no mere fancy of a poet, for deep in the heart of man is the love of beauty, and many wondering glances do the common people cast upon the glory of the world. But we may readily concede that fixing our anxious eyes too much on the earth we miss many grand spectacles in the sky. The firmament is the Royal Academy of God, glorified with countless masterpieces of form and colour. The transfiguring touch of the Divine hand changes the pliant vapour into rich sculptures, superb architecture and pictures of matchless grace or grandeur. The 'vapour that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away,' is a fountain of perennial delight to poet and painter: it calls our thought up to the glory of Heaven, to the glory of God. A vapour may also be a cloud—dense, dark and forbidding. It may obscure the light, discolour the sky, mar the summer. Thus with human life—it also may be a thing of glory or of gloom. Some lives are as the cloud which lies on the sky, an inky blot; whilst others in their brightness and beauty remind us of those rainbow scraps which are very jewels on heaven's bosom.

What makes the difference in the vapour? The sun. The orb of day dyes the vapours with colour, warms them with fire, illuminates them with brightness, and fills the depths with shifting scenes of splendour. What the sun is to the vapour, God is to our life; and life shines or saddens according to its relation to Him. Everyone will feel that the men referred to in the context are anything but noble characters. 'Go to now, ye that say, To-day or to-morrow we will go into this city, and spend a year there, and trade, and get gain.' There is nothing sublime here. All is poor, coarse, common-place enough. We instinctively feel this type of life lacks depth and dignity, and must therefore lack the pure satisfaction of ideal life. The Apostle reminds us of the missing element: 'For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that.' The missing element is godliness. God was not in their thought, their affection, their purpose, and the gold of life was changed to clay. 'The Lord God is a sun'; and our lives shine—everything in us and about us shines—just as we keep in the stream of His brightness.

2. A vapour—and yet a vapour may be the source of barrenness or blessing. Indeed a vapour may be one of three things. It may be the source of blasting, like the sulphurous vapour of the thunder-cloud. This is true of some lives; they are only pernicious and destructive. The course of many who pass through the world may be traced by the havoc they work. Or, the vapour may be a merely barren thing, not working any particular and obvious mischief, only drifting before the wind in barren

[1] J. Ruskin, *Sesame and Lilies*, § 98.

magnificence. Thus is it with many lives. Men live for garish pride, or rosy pleasure, or golden gain, or crimson greatness; the earth is no better for their presence, they work no private or public service. These serve not their own generation 'according to the will of God'; they serve themselves according to their own will. Or the vapour may be a source of rich and lasting blessing, the messenger of God, scattering showers of blessing. Thus devoted souls pass through society, rich in precious and holy influence; they drop as the rain and distil as the dew, and when they have pased out of sight we trace their passage by the rising flowers. If life is to be noble and blessed it must be not hurtful, not neutral, but beneficent. The men indicated by the Apostle in our text are selfish as well as godless. 'We will go into this city, and spend a year there, and trade, and get gain.' It is all traffic and lucre—the water-spout which gathers into itself, not the cloud dropping fatness. This selfishness ruins life utterly. We become honourable and blessed only in giving as we get, serving as we enjoy. And it is comforting to remember that this most evanescent life may be so richly, widely and enduringly made a blessing.

'He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down.' The flower cut down is a sweet thing still, and short-lived service leaves lasting fragrance:

> A sweet perfume still lingering
> In essence pure, and living thus
> In blessedness about the spot,
> When rose, and bush, and bloom are not.

The virtue of a vanished life abides in the heart and mind of men, working subtly to most gracious issues; the ashes are strewn, yet the glow abides; the strings are broken, yet the music lingers; the flower withers, yet the healing leaves stored in secret places distil sweetness and life.

¶ Mr. Thomas Kyd tells of the impression Dr. Kidd left by his occasional visits to Dundee:—'Forty years after Dr. Kidd's death, my father was stopped by an elderly woman in the neighbourhood of Rose Street, Dundee. She wore an apron under which she seemed to carry a parcel. This she took from its hiding-place just as my father and she met each other. It was a little portrait in a paltry frame, the same likeness of Dr. Kidd that does duty as a frontispiece of some of his books. "You'll mind wha that is," said she. My father looked at the engraving, and replied that he well remembered the Doctor. "I'm but a puir body," continued the woman, "I get aff the Buird" (the Parochial Board), "but I saw the pictur' a while syne in a broker's shop—it was ninepence, and I saved up till I was able to buy it." And then she told how the Doctor used to preach in the Chapelshade Kirk on fast-days or communion Sabbaths when she was a lassie, and how much spiritual good she had got from his ministrations there, few and far between as his appearances must have been. "I sometimes think," added she, "that I can hear his voice reading in the Revelations yet."'[1]

3. A vapour—yet a vapour may end in a drain or a rainbow. The rain and the snow come down from heaven with differing destinies. Sometimes the rain trickles into the pure mountain-stream, refreshes the grass and flowers, and runs with music into the sea; again, the heaven-distilling vapour falls into miry places and runs in unclean channels to the black underground. The snow may fall on Alpine ranges, retaining long its driven whiteness and shining with strange splendour in the sun, or it may be trampled in the city streets. So widely contrasted is the destiny of that self-determining vapour—human life. In the text we see men living without any recognition of the relation of this life to immortality. Giving themselves to life on its physical and human side, they lose all clearness and brightness of soul, the stream ever becoming more turbid as it flows. And Jesus 'spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: and he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I

[1] *Dr. Kidd of Aberdeen*, 305.

do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.' This man's life ran in the gutter, and ended in the sewer. It is whilst we regard these fleeting days in their relation to the will of God that we penetrate their grandeur and become conscious of exaltation. 'That thou mayest love the Lord thy God, and that thou mayest obey his voice, and that thou mayest cleave unto him: for he is thy life, and the length of thy days.' 'For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.' It is whilst we regard the eternal meaning of life that all the discipline of this world develops greatness and purity of spirit. 'Our light affliction, which is but for a moment,' and every other light thing which is but for a moment 'worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen.'

¶ The legend of the American Indians declares that as the flowers fade in forest and prairie their lost beauty is gathered into the rainbow, and thus they glow again in richer colour than before. It is however no legend which teaches the perpetuity of moral excellence. The earth is always being made the poorer by the departure of those whom we so sincerely admired or passionately loved—those who were ornaments of society, the pride of the Church, the light of our home. Now some white lily is plucked from the nursery; now another is cut down

> When youth its pride of beauty shows,
> Fairer than spring the colours shine,
> And sweeter than the virgin rose;

whilst others in ripeness of life and maturity of beauty are borne from before our weeping eyes. But these are neither lost nor injured. We look up to see them shine forth again in added grace and glory in the rainbow round about the Throne.[1]

(D.V.)

Ja. iv. 15.—'Ye ought to say, If the Lord will.'

Our Puritan forefathers introduced religion into their most trivial and commercial conversation, and interlarded all their talk with pious phrases, texts of Scripture, and the like. And the early Methodists followed much the same practice, if not to the same extent. Even down to times some of us can remember, our letters, placards, and circulars announcing coming events contained the initials (D.V.) or 'God willing.'

Why have they dropped out? Why do we now scrupulously avoid them? Because we are so much more worldly and ignore their implications? No, but because they were abused, dragged into the mire, and made the cloak of deceit and hypocrisy. It is much easier to imitate a man's garments than his person; the words of great ideas are much more easy to counterfeit than the spirit of them, and so these sacred phrases became the stock-in-trade of the humbug, and all honest people began scrupulously to avoid them. The historian, the essayist, and the novelist have satirized such hypocrisy *ad nauseam*, and when it is introduced on the Exchange or the market in ordinary conversation it excites chilly suspicion and the buttoning up of our pockets. It is the same in our public life. Our language is one vast mosaic of Scripture phraseology, but of late we have begun to eschew such phrases because they have become suspect. In the Franco-German War the Emperor William's telegrams to the Empress announcing his victories were so fulsomely pious that *Punch* expressed the almost universal disgust of all decent people by printing a stanza which has since become historic:

[1] W. L. Watkinson, *Mistaken Signs*, 32ff.

By grace divine, my dear Augusta,
We've had another awful buster:
Ten thousand Frenchmen sent below!
Praise God, from whom all blessings flow!

When it came to things like that, it was high time to make a change; and so, latterly, religious phraseology has very much dropped out of common speech. It is a change for the better, a mark of improvement and not of decadence. Mental culture always brings delicacy and reticence about the deeper things: the more profoundly we feel the less we speak of it.

Then is James inviting us to return to the old practice and expose ourselves once more to the old abuse? No! we abstain from pious language for common use because the things represented are too sublime, too precious for vulgar employment; it is because we think more of them, and not less. It is the greatness, the profundity, the far-reaching significance of these things that makes us silent about them. That is a beautiful sentiment, if it is true; but is it? Are we silent about life's greatest things because they have sunk too deep within us and fill us too entirely, so that we cannot bear to speak lightly of them? We must each hold this mirror to our souls for ourselves.

1. Perhaps we can find what is our rule in these matters. A man brags about his brand of cigars; but never dreams of boasting about his wife or his mother. He brags about his skill at billiards, but never of the blessed, life-long sacrifice he is making for his family; he is conceited about his execution on the flute, but never about the beautiful, modest, Christian life he is living. Why? Ask such a man that question and he would call you a Philistine—you are trifling; these things are infinitely too sacred to be bandied about in common conversation. That is the rule: how does it apply in these higher things—God, religion, the transcendent dream of immortality? We are silent enough about these things—why? Is it because they are too precious, too important to come into common use? *Is it?* Good, if it is so; but is it? If God is really at the centre of our lives, if religion is our very atmosphere, and the hope of immortality throbs like an intoxication through our whole being, we shall not need to print texts of Scripture on our bill-heads, or write *Deo volente* on our advice notes. The truth is that God, religion, and immortality are such immense conceptions that if they really had any place in our lives pious phrases would become ridiculously superfluous.

2. The position is, then, that we have given up the use of pious phrases because the things they represent are so precious that we cannot endure to see them abused; because the ideas they represent have become such great factors in our lives that the outward naming of them, if not unnecessary, may at least be taken for granted. But is that the actual state of the case? Can we take the large place and power of spiritual ideas in these times for granted? If we can, how is it that, whilst our tastes have refined us so that we have become fastidious about the use of pious words, the spirit of the age, the spirit of the average modern Christian, has become earthier, more materialistic and worldly? No, the truth is that in suppressing the word we have also suppressed the thing; left it out of our speeches, but left it also out of our thoughts. Self-deception is, to mortals, the easiest of all things, and there is evidence enough that in this matter we are deluding ourselves!—or, if not deluding, we are at least forgetting ourselves.

Many of us are engaged in business, our lives and labours are necessarily spent in trade. Has God to come into our trade, religion and immortality to find a place in our bargaining, our buying and selling, our serving and being served? No, He *is* in, the soul and centre and spirit of it all! It is only blindness and stupidity that leaves Him out. As Martineau put it: 'Your religion has not to come into your business—your business *is* your religion.' Every part of our lives is penetrated with God. You have not made a little corner of your life for God—you cannot put a cathedral into a pill-box! He has taken

you and all your concerns, your sorrows and worries and burdens and perplexities, up into His own immensity; you and all you have are become parts of the great scheme of human uplifting. There is the truth. Our besetting fault is our littleness; our poor, mean, belittling limitations. God calls us to greatness; to grandeur of development and splendour of life—calls us to a perpetual upward climb, 'forgetting the things that are behind, and reaching forward to the things that are before.'[1]

¶ There is a special charm around a Scottish saying which many faithful mothers have drilled their children to utilise—*If spared*. When proposing to do anything that is future, the words 'if spared' must always be used. Through time the words may not be spoken, but they are nevertheless in mind. They help to keep us with the finite subordinate to the Infinite. We move in the presence of the Almighty, and our life's actions are consequently ennobled and enriched. Possibly the words may be too commonly and loosely used; perhaps their sacred meaning may be abused; nevertheless, where spoken thoughtfully they express a meek and reverent attitude. In conformity with James's view of God as the source of life it is to be expected that he should resent any action on man's part which might deny to God supremacy over life and death.[2]

Omission.

Ja. iv. 17.—'To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.'

In the year 1744 Louis XV. of France was smitten with a malady which threatened to cut short his days. At the news of this, Thomas Carlyle tells us, France was in terror, and Paris seemed like a city taken by storm; the churches resounded with supplications and groans, and the prayers of priests and people were every moment interrupted by their sobs. This wide-spread manifestation of tender interest and deep affection earned for Louis XV. the surname of 'Louis the Well-beloved.' The love of the people for their young King was not inspired by what he had done, but by what they hoped he would do. The nation had long been crushed under the heel of a cruel tyrant, and they regarded the accession of Louis XV. as the dawn of a brighter and happier day; they loved him because in him rested all their hopes. This was in 1744. Look at him in 1774. Thirty years have come and gone, and Louis XV. again lies sick. The churches do not now resound with excessive groanings; sobs do not now interrupt any prayers, for no prayers are offered; and 'Louis the Well-beloved' is the best hated man in France. In 1744 he asked, 'What have I done to be so loved?' He might now ask, 'What have I done to be so hated?' He had done nothing.[1]

1. Few things are more characteristic and impressive in the moral teaching of Jesus than the stress which is laid on positive and active goodness. He transposes the Golden Rule from a negative to an affirmative form, and sums up the negatives of the Jewish Decalogue in two positive commandments. In the Sermon on the Mount He includes among the workers of iniquity, 'whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not.' The priest and the Levite seem poor, pitiful figures beside the Good Samaritan; yet they had not been guilty of any positive act of wrong-doing. It was not they who had stripped and wounded the traveller on the Jericho road; they had done nothing; but in the Lord's eyes it was their sin and shame that they had done nothing—that they had passed by a suffering fellow-man without helping him. If he had died there at the wayside, the law could not have touched them for turning a deaf ear to the call of humanity; yet in the eyes of Divine Justice, and of the higher human justice, they would have been guilty of murder. They left the man to perish when they could have saved him. Their omission of duty was as bad as the crime of the thieves; their indifference as sinful as the violation of the commandment:

[1] J. Ackworth, *Life's Working Creed*, 169ff.
[2] J. MacDougall, *The Modern Conflict*, 97.

[1] R. A. Dickson.

'Thou shalt not steal.' Little did the priest and the Levite think, when they passed by on the other side that day, that they would be for all time an example of the baseness of doing nothing, of the wickedness of a negative failure.

In the parable of Dives and Lazarus it is not the things that he did, but the things that he did not do and might have done, that sent the rich man to the place of torment. To get the full meaning of that parable, we must not attribute to Dives anything other than what is there set down. He is not accused of any positive transgression, not accused of oppressing the poor or of defrauding his servants, not blamed for his wealth and the comfort in which he lived; he is not called a bad man; on the contrary, he was no doubt eminently respectable and religious, but with a thoroughly negative and commonplace view both of morality and religion. All the genial and beneficent forces of human life had played upon him in vain. His wealth had not been regarded as obligation and opportunity; it had done to him the worst that wealth could do to a man—it had made him more self-centred and self-regarding. He was sent to hell to be punished for, and purged of, his callous selfishness, his moral obtuseness and stupidity, shown in his ignorance of, and indifference to, what was going on at his own gate. And so we see him suffering for what he did not do, for the righteous acts, the merciful deeds, the beneficent work he might have done, had ample time and means to do, and did not do.

In every parable of judgment it is not for ill done, but for good left undone—for negative failure—men are condemned and punished. Our Lord, the pitying Judge of human weakness, who was tenderness itself to all those who were led astray by ignorance, or evil education, or unpreparedness for temptation, was very severe toward those who sinned by doing nothing. It was not their doing, but their not doing, that earned for five of the virgins the name of 'foolish'; it was not their doing, but their not doing, that lost them so much—that quenched the light in their lamps, and shut against them for ever the door of one royal opportunity.

In the parable of the talents, the unprofitable servant is not a fraudulent servant; he is not accused of misspending his talent, of wasting it in riotous living, or of losing it by mismanagement or neglect. In all negative ways he acted with the most scrupulous honesty and care. He prided himself upon his exactness. When his master returned he gave back the money to him, saying, 'Lo, there thou hast what is thine; count it, thou wilt find it all right.' Yet for all that, and because of that, he was condemned—condemned because he had not done anything with his *one* talent, condemned just because he was an unprofitable servant.

In the parable of the Messianic judgment we are taught even more impressively the same lesson. The 'Come, ye blessed,' is addressed to the doers of good, the 'Depart, ye cursed,' not to evildoers, but to doers of nothing—'Inasmuch as ye did it not.' No crime is alleged against them, and no heresy; they are not guilty of doing anything, but of *not* doing anything—guilty of not helping when and where they could have helped. The inhumanity imputed to them is simply indifference, and the crime the common sin of omission. The one sole count of the indictment is, 'Inasmuch as ye did it not.' It is not for perverting their powers and opportunities to purposes of self-aggrandisement or cruelty that the Judge condemns them, but for not devoting them to generous purposes and ends. 'Inasmuch as ye did it not to these, ye did it not to me.'

¶ Does the sentence of doom seem harsh? It is our Lord's righteous and reasonable condemnation of people who knew the good they might have done, but did it not. Some years ago in an American city an ill-clad, barefooted lad was returning from Sunday School. A man stopped him with the inquiry, 'Where have you been?' 'To Sunday School,' was the reply. 'And what did you learn there?' again asked the man, with a sneering look. 'I learnt that God is Love,' was the answer. 'How can you really believe that? If God is Love, why

has He not told someone to put better clothes on your back and shoes on your bare little feet?' For a moment or two the boy was silent and then made this crushing reply, 'I guess God does tell somebody, but somebody forgets.'[1]

Listen to Rudyard Kipling's story of Tomlinson:

And they came to the gate within the walls
where Peter held the keys.
'Stand up, stand up now, Tomlinson, and
answer, loud and high.
The good that ye did for the sake of men or
ever ye came to die—
The good that ye did for the sake of men in
the little earth so lone.'
And the naked soul of Tomlinson grew white
as a rain-washed bone.
'This I have read in a book,' he said, 'and this
was told to me.
And this I have thought that another man
thought of a Prince in Muscovy.'
And Peter twirled the jangling keys in weari-
ness and wrath.
'Ye have heard, ye have heard, ye have
thought,' he said, 'and the tale is yet to run.
By the worth of the body that once ye had,
give answer—what ha' ye done?'

2. Thus much for the things undone, the omissions of duty considered as sins. Let us now consider their consequences—the injury they do both to ourselves and to our fellows.

(1) First, the injury they do to ourselves. Who will say that the loss and suffering caused by dishonesty, or anger, or revenge are worse than those caused by idleness or negligence? Yet idleness and negligence are sins of not doing, and idleness is, as you know, the mother of vice, and negligence has more disasters and failures to answer for than has positive wrong-doing. In the years of young manhood, indolence and slackness, the failure to cultivate one's powers of mind, will be a greater disqualification for work and service in after-days, and a more irreparable loss, than young men can now be possibly aware of. Few are alive to the value of what they are wasting, while they are busy wasting it. It is the demands and needs of the future years that open our eyes. Each period of life has its own appointed work, and the failure to do each period's work at the appointed time will ruin the most promising career. Simple negligence, neglect of study, neglect of the daily duty and discipline, neglect of business, may be just as mischievous, as far as earthly success is concerned, as cheating and swindling. The faculties which are not trained in youth are stunted for life, and the powers which are not exercised in age shrink and fade.

The habitual neglect of meditation and prayer, of quiet thought and quiet worship, will be disastrous to all religious excellence. One can destroy his soul, that is, his higher life, very effectively just by taking no means to save and strengthen it. Weeds only require to be left alone to grow fast and thick enough. We can hardly leave undone what is right without drifting into positive evil. Positive wrong-doing has indeed its origin chiefly in not doing. It is because men leave certain things undone, neglect certain moral precautions and safeguards, neglect to cultivate certain tempers and habits, that they gradually become false, dishonest, and vicious men. Many a tragic wreck of character is due not to deliberate purpose, but to negligence. A man can never remain good who is simply passive. He is wholly unsafe as long as he will not put himself under discipline. Through neglect of moral and spiritual culture and discipline, mind and heart are weakened and corrupted. In some old books on the good life, the list of deadly sins ends with sloth, which is defined as a certain inactivity or laziness of mind. But, though placed last in the list of moral offences, it is by no means least in its sorrowful results. It is, as we are told by these ancient masters of the art of living well, always sure to be followed by wayward passions and uncontrolled desires, which in their turn are sure to be followed by positive wrong-doing. Good action, which establishes the dominion of principle and forms habits,

[1] W. J. Cole, in *The Record*, March 27, 1924.

is an essential means of moral and religious growth. Continuance in well-doing is the secret of a life truly strong and progressive in all best ways.

¶ What can be done to combat indolence and slackness is shown by the story of Captain Scott, the Explorer. When he was a lad his biographer tells us that 'it was an effort to him to work hard, he cast a wistful eye on "slackers," he was not a good loser, he was untidy to the point of slovenliness, and he had a fierce temper. All this I think has been proved to me up to the hilt, and as I am very sure that the boy of fifteen or so cannot be very different from the man he grows into, it leaves me puzzled. The Scott I knew, or thought I knew, was physically as hard as nails and flung himself into work or play with a vehemence I cannot remember ever to have seen equalled. I have fished with him, played cricket and football with him and other games, those of his own invention being of a particularly arduous kind, for they always had a moment when the other players were privileged to fling a hard ball at your undefended head. "Slackness" was the last quality you would think of when you saw him bearing down on you with that ball, and it was the last he asked of you if you were bearing down on him. He was equally strenuous of work; indeed I have no clearer recollection of him than his way of running from play to work or work to play, so that there should be the least possible time between. It is the "time between" that is the "slacker's" kingdom, and Scott lived in it less than anyone I can recall.'

. . .

That Scott's horror of slackness was with him to the end of his life we know from the last letter he wrote to his wife. In that letter, when giving instructions regarding his son's upbringing, he said, 'Above all, he must guard and you must guard him against indolence. Make him a strenuous man. I had to force myself into being strenuous as you know—had always an inclination to be idle.'[1]

[1] Charles Turley, *The Voyages of Captain Scott*, 6, 428.

(2) But the evil results of failure to do the good we know we ought to do, do not stop with ourselves. It would be well for us if they did. Our sins of omission again and again inflict direct injury upon others, and may be mischievous and wicked to a high degree. They are often quite equivalent to transgressions of the most flagrant kind. Not to do a thing is often tantamount to doing its very opposite. The man who never makes any attempt to rescue a fellow-being from drowning when he could do something, is held to be morally guilty of the death he might have prevented. And it is the same in a thousand other things. We do nothing, we say nothing; but our politic silence and prudent inactivity are fraught with evil. We hear, for instance, a man whom we respect and trust bitterly denounced and condemned; we hear things said of him which we know in our hearts to be exaggeration and misrepresentation—if not positive lies; but we take no notice; we utter no word in his defence and favour, in a company, and at a time, when a true brave word may be all that is required to turn back the current of wrong opinion, and save the man from much suffering and loss. How much evil is wrought in the world towards individuals, families, communities, causes, movements, simply by those who choose to be silent, inactive, neutral, because they have not honesty and courage enough to speak and act in a straightforward way, and to give their influence openly to the side which they know to be true and right! It seems a slight offence—if an offence at all—to keep quiet, to make no sign. It seemed a slight thing for the young man Saul to stand by caring for the clothes of the men who stoned Stephen to death for no crime but that of bearing witness to what he knew to be the truth concerning one Jesus of Nazareth. It is just what many a young man does to-day when he stops to watch a street brawl; and yet years afterwards, this bystander, now an ardent supporter of the same faith which sustained the dying Stephen, said sadly of himself: 'I was there consenting unto his death.' He did nothing, he threw no stones, but his conscience, when awakened and enlightened,

made him speak of that careless act of his student days at Jerusalem: 'I was there consenting unto his death.'

You remember Hood's poem called 'The Lady's Dream,' and how he represents those whom the lady might have helped passing before her in a long and ghastly procession. She exclaims: 'See—

The wounds I might have healed!
The human sorrow and smart!
And yet it never was in my soul
To play so ill a part;
But evil is wrought by want of thought,
As well as want of heart.

Each pleading look that long ago
I scanned with heedless eye,
Each face was gazing as plainly there,
As when I passed it by.
Woe, woe for me if the past should be
Thus present when I die!

No need of sulphurous lake,
No need of fiery coal,
But only that crowd of human kind
Who wanted pity and dole,
In everlasting retrospect
Will wring my sinful soul.[1]

¶ If, seeing and acknowledging the lies of the world, Arthur, as see them you can with an only too fatal clearness, you submit to them without any protest farther than a laugh; if, plunged yourself in easy sensuality, you allow the whole wretched world to pass groaning by you unmoved; if the fight for the truth is taking place and all men of honour are on the ground armed on the one side or the other, and you alone lie on your balcony and smoke your pipe out of the noise and the danger, you had better have died, or never have been born, than be such a sensual coward.[2]

[1] J. Hunter, *God and Life*, 226ff.
[2] Thackeray, *Pendennis*, ch. xxiii.

The Labour Movement.

Ja. v. 1.—'Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you.'

If a vote were taken of the multitudes of labouring men and others who, in park or street, in square or hall, have given utterance to the impeachment of modern civilization, there is no doubt that of all the passages in the Bible, this, by a large majority, would turn out to be the most popular. Men who doubt the Bible, men who hate the Bible, if this passage were read to them, would cheer it to the echo, and accept it as a true portrait of society as it now exists. James, in this passage, puts tersely and gravely in a few sentences the substance of all the speeches against modern civilization.

Now, in the light of such a passage as this, the labour agitation of to-day has a claim upon the attention and sympathy of the Church of Christ. Our first impulse is to blame such a movement, and there is a great deal in the movement which goes far to justify such an attitude of mind. It is accompanied by much unreasoning fanaticism, gross exaggeration and mob-despotism. Like all other great and popular movements, it has attracted to itself multitudes of bad men and mad men, of lazy men and crazy men, of intolerable, impracticable and impossible men, of men who, under any system whatever, would be equally dissatisfied, equally troublesome, equally impossible. Nor again, can we help seeing that a very large part of the poverty and misery complained of by the working-classes to-day, is due to causes well within the control of the people who complain. The worst of all the tyranny to be found in English life to-day is the tyranny which the working-classes have built up by their own hands, and which can be removed only by their own act. Thomas Carlyle said to the English working-man of his day: 'Thou art the thrall, not of Cedric, the Saxon, but of thy own brutal appetites, and this cursed dish of liquor.'

And yet, when we have said all this, such a

passage as our text—which we take to be the inspired Word of the Lord—goes far to show what the merest glance at life proves to be the case, namely, that there does exist in our midst a vast amount of misery and wretchedness, which is not due to the vice, the idleness, or the imprudence of the poor, but rather to the conditions of life into which they have been born. It has been our custom to say that if men only cared to be sober and industrious in daily life, there need be no case of poverty in old age. Statistics carefully made prove the fallacy of this, and show that such are the conditions of life in England in the twentieth century, that there are thousands of men and women, however sober and industrious, who will find themselves, at the end of life, without a home to shelter their old age, or the price of a bed in which to draw their last breath. We have altered much since James wrote; we have made *some* ancient crimes impossible, at least in their ancient form, and yet the mass of the world's misery is tremendous. At times it seems as if it grew rather than diminished with the flow of years. Now, in the presence of all this poverty and wretchedness, the attitude which we Christian men and women should assume towards a movement which makes for a wider distribution of the blessings of this life is that of sympathy and co-operation. Whatever our views on party politics, if we are Christian people our sympathy should be with the oppressed, with the poor. 'When *he* saw the multitude, he was moved with compassion.'

We are called, then, to a very searching process of self-examination, and to see in very deed whether any part of this text is true of us. For this purpose let us now look at the four counts of this indictment.

1. The first is *fraud*. 'Behold, the hire of the labourers who mowed your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth out.' That is the charge brought against some of the masters of the first century. They were dishonest. James does not mince matters. He calls things by their plainest names. This also is the charge placed in the forefront of labour's accusations. The labourers of the world say that they are not honestly dealt with, and that what they ask is not charity, but justice.

Therefore, the first question we should ask ourselves as to the conduct of our life's work is this—Is it *honestly* carried on? Is it carried on in a spirit of scrupulous regard for the eternal law of honesty and truth? Honesty is the foundation virtue; if that is lacking in a man's life, it matters not what else is there, the whole fabric will collapse like the house on the sand, and great will be the fall thereof. Nor is this question so unnecessary as it may at first seem. Dishonesty, which means a lie in action, was the first of all human sins, and it has ever since followed humanity like its shadow. Every calling, every profession offers ample opportunity for dishonesty. The pressure of competition, the cutting down of prices, the rush for wealth, tend to sharpen these opportunities till they become keen-edged temptations; and there can be no doubt that a great many men do actually succumb to these. It is one of the features of our day, that crimes that require a certain amount of cleverness are on the increase. Then, in many businesses, if not in all, there are certain practices, certain tricks of trade, which are undeniably dishonest, but which, because they are customary, are not admitted to be dishonest, and perhaps by many, because their consciences are deadened, are not felt to be dishonest. Now, since it is certain that in all departments of human activity, a great deal of downright sin is committed every day, a vast amount of lies told, and an enormous amount of adulteration practised, our first concern as Christian men should be to see that the eternal law of honesty is not violated either by *us* personally, or by any who act for us in our name.

¶ 'It is impossible for a business man to live a Christian life,' said a tradesman to me in Hyde Park recently. 'Why do you say that?' I asked. 'Well, my master is a churchwarden at — Church, and he expects me to be dishonest to our customers.'[1]

[1] *The Happy Christian*, 137.

2. The second count is *cruelty*. The rich men of James' day kept back the very hire of the mowers and reapers who gathered in the harvest for them, and having filled their granaries with food for the winter, they were sent away empty-handed. Apart from the fraud, the charge emphasizes their cruelty, indicates that these ancient employers looked upon the men in their employment as so many human machines, necessary for reaping time, and for mowing time, then to be dismissed with the lowest wages that they could get them to accept; as to what happened to them during the winter, that was no concern of theirs.

This second count suggests another question which, as Christian men, we ought to ask ourselves. Are we right, as in the sight of God, in our treatment of those whom we employ? Now, what is that treatment? What ought it to be? You look upon the people in your employment as so many hands, they are necessary because you have got work to do. Behind the hands there is a soul, perhaps, but that is no concern of yours. These people only concern you when they enter your employment; when they leave, you have nothing to do with them; the money bond is the only bond between you. Well, that is plain enough, but can any Christian man, with the Bible open before him, accept that as his standard? You will say, no. But if not, what is the standard? How are we to deal with those in our employment? What is the rule? What other rule can there be than the golden rule of our Saviour—'As ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise.' That means: Don't let the men's hands conceal the fact that they have hearts and souls; deal with men in their integrity as men, not mere wealth-producing tools.

¶ In *One Increasing Purpose* Mr. Hutchinson's hero makes a two months' tour of the great industrial centres in the provinces. When he returns to London he gives his eldest brother his impressions of what he has seen. Said Sim, 'Niggs, I should say that I am at a point where it seems to me that there is something a bit wrong with everything.'

Andrew made the sound of a little puff down his nose. 'That is comprehensive, anyway.' . . .

Sim sat up. 'I will tell you a thing, Niggs. Comprehensive, you said; well, I will tell you a thing I ran across that is comprehensive, too, and illuminative of what I mean. This happened at Ginnel, Read's, the big——'

Andrew's murmur: 'I know them well.'

'Good. Well they employ hundreds of hands; I suppose they must have nearly two thousand on their work-roll, men and girls. Well, I should say that of all the shows I saw Ginnel, Read's was about the best; the most modern, the most up-to-date, I mean. I never anywhere saw people working under better conditions; all the work-rooms, all the provisions for the employees were the last word—last word in hygiene, in ventilation, in comfort, in arrangements for rest-rooms, recreation rooms, washing rooms; oh, everything; the last word and always on the look out—old Ginnel and his managers—to find a later' . . .

'But wait, Niggs. That is the picture; there is a story. The picture is these model, more than model, workshops; a model employer, Ginnel, Read, if ever there was one, you would say. The story is that in a pub nearby—I told you how I poked about everywhere—in a pub nearby, I got talking to one of the employees, a middle-aged chap, and a sulky, taciturn sort of devil. However, we got putting it across and he opened up. I had started on racing. He hopped straight out of that on to politics, socialism, capitalism, class war and all that; and he put up a lot of bitter stuff—though true, much of it, I had seen it, Niggs—about the miserable conditions of the Workers as opposed to the luxurious lives of the Spenders; that was *his* division of society, Workers and Spenders. I said to him "Well, anyway, you Ginnel, Read people haven't got much to complain about. You are done under model conditions that twenty years ago would have been thought heaven, and that crowds of other workers would think heaven to-day. Conditions," I said, "a dashed sight better than ever there were at my public school." Niggs, he spat on the ground. I don't think he did it entirely for contempt because I had been

in terror for my boots all the time we were talking, but it well might have been. He spat. "Model conditions," he said, "perfect ventilation, warmth, light, wash-houses with running hot water, canteen, first-aid departments, recreation rooms, all the rest of it. What in hell do you think they give us model conditions like that for?" "Why to do their duty by you," I said. He spat again. "Duty—hell!" he said; "all that stuff, all those model conditions, is just to get more out of us." '

Andrew ticked the ash of his cigar into a tray beside him. 'A criminal lunatic,' he said dispassionately.

'Niggs,' Sim said, 'there is a lot of truth in it!' . . .

'They don't put a thousand, or ten thousand, no, nor yet a five pound note, Niggs, into laying out their factories for the benefit of their people *only;* they put the money in because they know that they will get it back, in more efficient labour, many times over' . . .

'There is a lot of truth in what that chap, put it this way, in what that chap indirectly said—that the employer who wants to think that he does a lot for his people can't claim that by giving them the best possible working conditions he is doing it. Because he isn't, Niggs. What he does for them on those lines is not done first and last and wholly and solely for them; in some degree it is done for his own benefit also.'

'Whenever you hear business men, the kind of men I have been living with, your kind of men, you yourself, Niggs, whenever you hear them discussing a question as between themselves and their work people they always make it, and they always use the terms, a practical matter, or a personal matter, or a matter of principle, or a matter of business. Niggs, why—that is what I notice—why never a *human* matter?'

'These people, these employers, whatever they may do for their people, their *hearts* are not in it. Men like Ginnel, men like you Niggs. . . . You are warm enough in your people's interests in your office hours, but, Niggs, it is *only* in your office hours that your heart is there. When you leave your desks you take your hearts with you.'

'You take your hearts with you——' As if the phrase were a path on which, night-bound and groping, he suddenly had stumbled; as if, stumbling upon it, confidence and swifter movement were given him, he faced Andrew full and spoke quickly: 'You take your hearts with you. That is what I meant, Niggs, about everything being a bit wrong somewhere; and about there being truth in what that man said.' [1]

3. The third charge brought forward by James is the *abuse of wealth.* 'Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and your silver are rusted.' These were the three chief forms of ancient wealth—corn, clothing and precious metals. All were given for use, but these men strove only to accumulate—to enrich themselves. They had no thought of any duty that they owed either to God or to men. All their wealth was their own. 'What if we choose to let the mildew eat our corn, and the moth consume our garments—what then? Are they not all ours?' No! They are not. Both you and yours are God's. Their rust shall be for a testimony against you. You shall be arrested for this—brought to judgment for this—and the witnesses against you shall be: Mildewed corn from a world where many went hungry; moth-eaten garments from a land where little children perished of cold in the wintry blast; hoarded wealth from cities where multitudes went homeless because they had not the price of a pillow. The law demands two or three witnesses, and lo! here they come—the Three to testify against you! They say nothing of what you did, only of what you did not. 'Inasmuch as ye did it not' is the burden of their evidence.

Does it seem to any of us that James is *too* stern? Then let us remember that he does but faintly echo what Jesus Christ Himself said in the Parable of the Rich Man, and on many other occasions. The folly and sin of the rich man consisted in this—that he thought of his wealth, spoke of it, gloated over it, as if it were wholly his own to do whatever he liked

[1] P. 157ff.

with it; as if it brought with it no duties, no responsibilities whatever. Whereas it was not his—it was God's. He too was God's. That very night Death would come to prove that he was not his own master, but a servant who must obey the instant summons of his Heavenly Lord. Thus, being a servant—a steward—his very eating and drinking were acts of sin, because he was spending Another's money as if it were his own.

Now that word *steward* defines our relation to whatever we possess. We hold all things in trust, nothing in fee. God is not a hard master. He is generous and kind, but He *is* a master. The ox that treadeth out the corn must not be muzzled, but neither must he leave the corn unthreshed. It is right to own property, but to own property aright is to own it under a sense of responsibility to God and men.

¶ The outstanding impression I shall always retain of our dear friend is that of a life absolutely yielded to the Holy Ghost; and the joy, the boldness, the love, and the loyalty to Christ that we are prepared to see in such a life I saw markedly in him. The unselfishness, nay, the selflessness, of that life impressed me the more because of the temptations to ease and luxury surrounding him. He said to me once: 'I am sometimes blamed for possessing so much of this world's goods, but I tell them, "I am not my own; the Lord possesses me."' And as one of many who had to do with him financially and otherwise, I thank God for that impression he gave me of conscientious stewardship about money and business matters, where some of us are apt to fall grievously short.[1]

4. The last charge is that of *wanton luxury*. 'Ye have lived delicately on the earth, and taken your pleasure.' These men grudged no outlay upon their own appetites. They nourished their hearts as in a day of slaughter, a day when fatted beasts are killed, and everyone has a full meal. Such was every day to them—life was one long feast.

[1] *Life Radiant: Memorials of the Rev. Francis Paynter*, 214.

But do any lead such lives now? Do not waste time over such a question—rather ask yourself are you in any measure guilty of living such a life? For, be very sure of it, this also is a personal question for all of us. It needs very little capital to live a thoroughly selfish life. A man or woman may live 'delicately' in James' sense without having a large income. A man is to be judged not by what he lives on, but by what he lives for—by his ideas and aims.

There are men to-day who openly avow that their one aim in life is the destruction of the present state of society. Their words, and still more their deeds, fill us with horror. Anarchy seems to us to exhaust all the possibilities of madness and badness latent in human nature.

But in the light of the New Testament is there not something more terrible in the low aims of the majority of men? An industrial system that forces every man to compete instead of co-operating with his fellow, is not that also a species of Anarchy—the very worst in fact? The victims of dynamite may almost be counted on our fingers, but who shall count the victims of the organized selfishness we misname Christian civilization? How then do we stand related to this matter? Are we trying, above all things, to live delicately? Or do we, like Jesus Christ, live to do the will of Him that sent us into this strange sinful world?[1]

¶ One afternoon, as I took my walk in the neighbourhood of the Charterhouse, I saw a sight which aroused strange emotions. A convoy of waggons, laden with supplies of food, was escorted to market by a party of mounted police with pistols at their saddle-bow. Policemen lay stretched on the top of the cargo or hung on at the tail of the carts, while an idle crowd gaped at a pitiable procession which ought never to be seen in a country nominally Christian. Was it indignation at callous labourer or cruel agitator, who would, if they could, starve into servility a helpless population, that stirred within me? No, indeed. I thought of the dull imagination

[1] J. M. Gibbon, *The Vision and the Call*, 66ff.

which could not place itself in the position of other people. I thought how, if the dock labourers had been brought up in the traditions of our public schools, and if those who had loaded and were driving those waggons had been sneaks that had outraged the fundamental code of school-boy honour, that caravan would have had small chance indeed of ever reaching Smithfield. But still more I thought how impossible such a scene would have been, if only the Church of Christ had been true to the prophetic spirit in which it set forth on its evangelical mission of proclaiming the acceptable year of the Lord. I thought how He, who neither strove nor cried, who gave His own back to the smiter, and who said to His followers, 'In your patience ye shall win your souls,' yet pronounced woes, the severity of which no prophet has equalled, not against the Galileans whose blood Pilate mingled with the sacrifices, but against the comfortable, law-abiding Pharisees who devoured widows' houses and for a pretence made long prayers.[1]

The Righteous One.

(Good Friday).

Ja. v. 6.—'Ye have condemned, ye have killed the righteous one' (RV).

The Righteous One seems to have been a common title of the Lord in the earliest days of the Church. Peter uses it; so does Stephen; so does that Ananias who was sent to help Paul; and James, if we interpret him rightly, uses it here. The purpose of James's words here is not to dwell upon the patience of the Lord; it is to dwell upon His subduing majesty, and the profound seriousness of the crucifixion for those who have been responsible for it.

1. James was near in time to the tragedy of which he speaks. It is a deed of shame and blood which rouses his burning indignation as he thinks of it. He does not speak of the 'death' of the Lord—that would have been for him far too mild and colourless a word; he speaks of the Lord's 'killing.' Nor is James alone in this. Peter, in the earliest days, speaks in the same way: 'Him, being delivered up by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye by the hand of lawless men did crucify and slay.' 'Ye denied the Holy and Righteous One, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, and killed the Prince of Life.'

This aspect of the Cross is one which we ought never to let go, and which the Church never allows us to let go. Good Friday—good as in the deepest sense it is—is the day of the world's most awful crime, and the world has not repented of it. It is in the eye of the Church the darkest day of the whole year—a day not for anticipating the joy of the Easter salvation, but for going down into the depths of that horror and fear which the killing of the Lord ought to inspire in us all. And why so? Because the world's attitude to our Lord then is its attitude still, and we ourselves have much of the spirit of the world in us. It is easy to be outwardly and in word on the Lord's side now that He has triumphed; but should we have been on His side had we been living on the first Good Friday, or does the similarity of our own spirit to that of some, if not all, of our Lord's enemies show that we, too, should have been against Him? We may say what we will of the Jews, but is there any reason to suppose that our own nation would treat Him better to-day, if He came to us in the humble form in which He came of old?

2. The Jews of Jerusalem in our Lord's day were a people greatly divided among themselves; but there was one thing in which they were able to unite, and that was the condemnation and killing of the Lord. The Sadducees in high places, the religious Pharisees, the populace of the city, all had their share of responsibility for the Cross. If one of these three classes had taken the Lord's side, He would never have been crucified. What, then, was the reason for this strange unanimity? Let us think of the three classes, one by one.

(1) What, then, firstly, of the Sadducean high priests? We need not concern our-

[1] J. G. Simpson, *Great Ideas of Religion*, 192.

selves with their religious opinions; religious opinions, so far as we know, had nothing to do with their attitude towards our Lord. The high priests were neither for this view of religion nor for that view of religion; the high priests were for themselves and their nation. The great priestly families, out of which such men as Annas and Caiaphas came, had been but a few years earlier the rulers of Israel. From the Maccabean rising to the days of Herod the Great, priesthood and authority over the state had been united as never before in Israel's history. And though these days were now over, and the nation was ruled by Rome, the wealth and position of the priestly families had by no means passed away, and they were hostile to our Lord because His action and His teaching threatened all for which they cared. It was not only that our Lord's cleansing of the Temple interfered with the profits they were making; it was that our Lord's claim threatened the whole existing order. Listen to Caiaphas: 'If we let him alone, all men will believe on him: and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation.' Or listen to Annas as he asks 'Jesus of his disciples, and of his teaching.' In our Lord's disciples and our Lord's claims Annas sees the danger of a rebellion against Rome, and that, he is sure, will be futile, and end in the loss of all that is dear to them. Annas and Caiaphas probably knew little about our Lord and His teaching; the Sadducees never gave the attention to religious questions which the Pharisees gave. But they saw that He imperilled the existing order, and in comparison with that they thought His life of no importance. That is the characteristic attitude of the rich and of those in authority. If religion means the support of existing arrangements, they will be supporters of religion; but if it threatens them, those who stand for it must be crushed at all costs.

(2) Thus far the Sadducees. What of the Pharisees? Here we have to do with men of a totally different stamp. The Pharisees were the party of religion, devoted to the religion of Israel as they understood it. Many of them in the past had died nobly for their faith, and, though our Lord's denunciation shows plainly that their religion was no longer the reality which it once had been, we shall do the Pharisees great injustice if we regard them all as conscious hypocrites, in the modern sense of the word. The trouble was that they had come to identify religion with their own religious system, and rather than abandon it they would crucify anyone who threatened its continuance. Now, our Lord did threaten it. The supernatural beliefs of the Pharisees our Lord shared. But the Pharisees had turned the noble and beautiful religion of Israel into a hard and intolerable system of legalism, which covered every part of life—a system in which the traditions of men were put on a level with the law of God, and at times even supplanted it. They tithed 'mint, and anise, and cummin,' and left 'undone the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith,' and that our Lord would not endure. He refused to accept their reading of the law of Moses, and by word and deed set it aside, while at the same time He made moral and spiritual demands upon them which they were not prepared to meet. The real demand of the Pharisees was that mercy and justice should yield to the claims of the legal system that they had worked out; the real demand of our Lord was that the legal system should yield to the claims of mercy and justice. Now, that is the danger of religious people at all times. Our religious system usurps the place of the living God. We do not like to be brought, as our Lord brings us, face to face with God and His limitless claims; we shrink from the self-surrender which faith involves. What we like is, as we sometimes say, to 'know what we have to do.' We like to have a clearly defined system, whose demands can be stated in black and white, and in obeying which we can feel that we have fulfilled our obligations, and that there is no more to be asked of us. In all our religious systems to-day the place of Jesus Christ is so great that it is difficult to think of them as rivals to Him. But legalism is legalism, and it is and always must be the enemy of the religion of our Lord.

(3) Thirdly, what of the common people? They were probably, for the most part, neither Sadducees nor Pharisees. What they desired was a great uplift for themselves. They wished the Romans to be cast out and themselves to become lords of the world, as the prophets of the Old Testament seemed to promise them. They were not naturally hostile to our Lord, as the Sadducees and Pharisees were. He threatened nothing that they held dear. If He would have proclaimed Himself to be the kind of deliverer for which they were looking, they would have followed Him to the death. But for our Lord's deep and spiritual religion they had no use. Barabbas, the bold insurrectionary leader, was their hero, and when the choice between our Lord and Barabbas was given them their choice was Barabbas. Notice in the story of the Passion how it came about. The common people had nothing to do with our Lord's apprehension. Probably when they gathered round Pilate's palace in the early morning they knew nothing of what had taken place, and came simply to ask for the release of Barabbas. But their devotion to Barabbas and to the aims for which Barabbas stood, involved the sacrifice of the Lord, and they did not shrink from the sacrifice. Now, that is the danger of the masses at all times. To say that our Lord is the friend of the masses is not to say that the masses are necessarily the friends of our Lord. Generally speaking, their minds are set upon aims quite different from His. They may not be at all hostile to our Lord personally, but they set Him aside for leaders and teachers of a different kind.

3. When we trace to its roots the awful crime of which we think to-day, we begin to wonder how we should have acted ourselves. It is easy for us, as a rule, to feel ourselves to be on the side of Jesus Christ, for we have formed a picture of Him consistent with our own view of life, and steadfastly maintain that our picture is the true one. Our imaginary Christ is on our side, and therefore we feel ourselves to be on His. But let us go back to James, and by his words judge of the correctness of our picture. He was very close to our Lord in His earthly life; there is no writer of the New Testament who so closely reproduces our Lord's actual teaching. Do we find ourselves at home with James? If we are rich, are we at home with him? He is terribly severe with the rich. If we are religious people, are we at home with him? Do we feel that what we mean by religion is the same as what James means by religion, or do we find him startling, disturbing, out of sympathy with our actual religious life and outlook? If we are poor, do we find ourselves at home with him? To a certain extent, no doubt, we do; we enjoy his denunciations of others. But do we not feel that he stops short just when we wish him to go on, and that when he tells us to 'be patient until the coming of the Lord' he forfeits our sympathy and we no longer take an interest in what he says? Well, let us not deceive ourselves. James says what our Lord said before him, and nothing else. He may startle us more than our Lord startles us, because we are less familiar with his words, and have not yet learnt to put a meaning of our own into them. But our Lord says what James says, and if, in the last resort, we are not prepared for the present order of things to pass away, or for a profound alteration in the character of our religion, or for patient endurance, there is little doubt where we should have stood on the first Good Friday. We should—unwillingly, perhaps, but nevertheless really—have taken our part in condemning and killing the Righteous One. More than this, we are condemning Him, killing Him still. His life is being stifled in the world to-day, because now, as then, the rich, and the poor, and the conventionally religious, are, in fact, united against Him.[1]

Christ stands at the bar of the world to-day,
As He stood in the days of old.
And still, as then, we do betray
Our Lord for greed of gold.
When our every deed and word and thought
Should our fealty proclaim,

[1] H. L. Goudge, *Thoughts for Dark Days*, 82ff.

Full oft we bring His name to nought
And cover Him with shame.

Not alone did Judas his Master sell,
Nor Peter his Lord deny,
Each one who doth His love repel,
Or at His guidance doth rebel,
Doth the Lord Christ crucify.

Like the men of old, we vote His death,
Lest His life should interfere
With the things we have, or the things we crave,
Or the things we hold more dear.

Christ stands at the bar of the world to-day,
As He stood in the days of old.
Let each man tax his soul and say,—
'Shall I again my Lord betray
For my greed, or my goods, or my gold?'[1]

The Slow Progress of Missions.

Ja. v. 7.—'Behold the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain.'

Every countryman in Syria would have understood James' metaphor. The corn was sown in September; in October there came the early rain, which made the seed sprout; the latter rain fell, as a rule, in March or the beginning of April, in time to make the ears swell before they ripened. In a soil of remarkable fertility, but generally of no great depth, spread as it was over the limestone rock, everything depended on the two rainfalls. The husbandman could only prepare the soil and sow the seed, the rest he must leave to God; and James dwells on the long patience with which, as a rule, a Syrian peasant waited for the precious fruit of the earth, and for the rainfall which was so necessary to its growth.

1. Now, if anything is clear about God's work in Nature, it is that it proceeds gradually, that it cannot be precipitated. This truth finds, perhaps, unintentional expression in the modern term of which we hear so much—evolution. Evolution is one of those words which have a religious or an irreligious meaning, according to the antecedent ideas with which they are associated in the speaker's mind. If by evolution I mean the work of a self-existent force in Nature, originating I know not how, and tending I know not whither, but without any break of continuity whatever introducing the unexplained, the unexplainable mystery of life, then the conception is quite irreconcilable with any serious belief in God. If by evolution I mean an observed connection between some of God's earlier and later works in Nature of such a sort that one leads to the other by a graduated sequence without violence, without catastrophe, this surely is so far from being irreligious that it may illuminate our conception of some of the operations of God. But whether we use the word or not, there can be no doubt about the slow and patient travail of God in Nature. One period in the earth's earliest condition introduces to another; one phase of natural life leads on to the confines of another; this epoch of human history is the parent of much that first emerges to view in that—the truth being that the one presiding and controlling Mind is throughout at work, never ceasing from, never hesitating about, His task; and that Eternal Wisdom which reaches from one end to another mightily and sweetly doth order all things. And as in Nature, so, James implies, it is in grace. Man does his part; he sows the word of life, he prepares the soil, he plants with Paul, he waters with Apollos, but he can do no more, and God, who sends the early and the latter rain, alone gives the increase.

2. So it is in the history of individuals when that great change takes place which is called conversion, whether from error to truth or from ungodliness of life to obedience of Christ. Conversion is not so sudden a process as it may seem to be. It is sudden, perhaps, at last. There may be a moment when a man is conscious of passing from darkness to light, from

[1] John Oxenham, *The King's High Way*, 66.

the power of Satan to God, just as there is a moment when the fruit has ripened perfectly so that it falls; but that moment has been long prepared for. Long before Saul of Tarsus lay prostrate on the road to Damascus, he had brooded over the meaning of the dying words and the death of Stephen. He could not at once dismiss as of no account the prejudices of a lifetime, the respect in which he held his Pharisee teachers, the strong and subtle ties by which his heart and his understanding alike were bound to the old religion of Israel. But in time this process of spiritual fermentation had done its work, and so when our Lord appeared on the road to Damascus Saul was prepared for Him.

¶ Augustine tells us that long before the change which was precipitated by his reading the passage in the Epistle to the Romans he had met with teachers, events, examples which had set him thinking. He put those thoughts aside, but they returned. He again dismissed them; again they came back to him. He was in truth, ill at ease; his Manichean creed, his dissolute life, were the husks on which this Prodigal Son long fed, but those husks had a work of disenchantment to do, though time was needed in which to do it, and at last this preparatory process was over. The hesitations, the misgivings, the yearnings, the relapses, the near approaches to grace, and the shrinkings back from grace had all come to an end; the fruit had ripened, whereby the Christian Church received the greatest of her teachers since Paul.

3. And so, too, in the history of societies. It took three centuries to convert the Roman empire to Christianity, if, indeed, we may rightly so describe the numerical superiority, for it was not much more, on the part of the Christians at the end of the first quarter of the fourth century of our era. And yet, even so described, what a wonderful work it was! Three centuries before, such a result would have seemed impossible to any man of sense and judgment. Everything was against Christianity—the Government, the wealthy, the influential, the intelligent, as well as the people. The Government from time to time exchanged a contemptuous toleration of Christians for a bitter persecution of them; the literary men deigned to notice them only in terms of extreme derision and contempt; the people regarded them as food for the lions in the amphitheatre. Again and again it seemed to the servants of Christ that the struggle was too prolonged, too unequal to be maintained. Again and again saints and martyrs pleaded, 'How long, O Lord, how long?' and yet all the while the work which preceded the conversion of the empire was slowly going forward. The faith was making its way, sometimes penetrating in a very fragmentary form into the thoughts of one set of men, sometimes presenting itself to another amid the crowd of comparatively worthless rivals as a new idea which was worth considering. The Divine Christ walked like the stranger on the Emmaus road, but now in conversation with pagan hearers, long before He flashed His Godhead on them in the communion of the Church. Little by little the leaven worked in all quarters of the vast lump of the old society; little by little faith made or begged its way as a stranger living on precarious sufferance, presenting itself only to be criticised, scouted, repelled again and again, before, at last, it could take strong possession of the souls of men.

There were no missionary societies in those days, no secretaries, sermons, public meetings, annual reports. The Church was the one missionary society. She set herself down among the great heathen populations as they looked at her, first fiercely, then more kindly, then more fiercely than ever, as if angry that, for the moment, she had succeeded in fascinating them. Every Christian in those days carried his life in his hand. He was a missionary by the mere fact of being a Christian. The influence that radiated from him insensibly won first toleration, then respect, then affection and reverence. Men wondered at a type of character that was new to them, and as obviously superior to Stoicism as it was new. Sometimes a soldier in the ranks, sometimes a professor of literature, sometimes an artist,

now and then a mechanic, or a merchant, rarely someone attached to the person of the emperor, not seldom the slave, lived among the heathen, confessing Jesus Christ. When one Christian in a great family was a slave he was felt to be in the enjoyment of an elevating principle of life which placed his owner at a disadvantage. He was calm, collected, indifferent to wrongs and insults, and consistent in his life as seeing an invisible Master; fearless as fearing only God; gentle as seeing in every man a possible brother in the faith; patient because long discipline had conquered self-will in him; disappointed at nothing in this world because hoping nothing from it; without anxiety because no earthly thing could terrify him; inaccessible to corruption because having his desires perfectly in God; inaccessible to flattery because at heart indifferent to any judgment but one; not dazzled by the world's splendid pageant because himself without an ambition to share it. When many hundreds or thousands of men of this character were scattered throughout the world, they were inevitably missionaries, even though they never opened their mouths. Little by little their example did its work. Men saw how they lived, and on occasion how they could die, and at last the desire to share the secret of their life became too strong for the complex but associated strength of paganism, and in words that were used at the time, the Cross ceased to mark the places of public execution, and it took its place on the diadem of the Cæsars.

4. In view of these natural analogies, and of this history, let us turn once more to the modern demand that so many missionaries shall produce in such and such a time so many converts, and to the impatience, if not the indignation, which is felt or expressed if this expectation is not realized, as though something had taken place which was akin to a commercial fraud. What is this modern way of looking at missions but an endeavour to apply to the kingdom of Divine grace those rules of investment and return which are very properly kept in view in a house of commerce? Does not this demand leave God, the Great Missionary, out of the calculation? God has His own times for pouring out His Spirit, His own methods of silent preparation, His own measures of speed and of delay, and He does not take missionaries or the promoters of missionary societies into His confidence. He has a larger outlook than they, and more comprehensive plans. We can but do as He bids us, and bide His time, as James puts it, like as 'the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain.'

Not that this reverent patience in waiting for God's blessing is any excuse whatever for relaxing the zealous activity with which missionary efforts should be prosecuted by the Church of God. The husbandman does not the less plough the soil or the less sow the seed because he is uncertain whether his labour will be followed by the early and the latter rain. If he does not plough and sow he knows that the rain will be useless to him. It is quite possible for a secret indifference to the interests of Christ and His Kingdom to veil itself under the garb of reverence; it is quite possible for us to refuse to help the work of Christian missions because we do not know how far God will promote a particular mission. But that is only one of the many forms of self-conceit which we Christians too often employ in order to evade Christian duties. Duties are for us, the results with God. We have no doubt, if we are Christians, as to what is our duty in this matter. Before us lies the greater part of the human race in darkness and in the shadow of death, with no true knowledge of God, and of the real meaning of life, and of that which follows it; and above us there rises the Cross—that Cross to which we are indebted for peace and hope, that Cross on which He hangs who is the only name given among men whereby men may be saved; and in our ears there sounds the command, uttered nineteen centuries ago, but always binding, always new, 'Ye shall be witnesses unto Me and unto all the world to preach the Gospel to every creature.' Our part is clear, even though after a century of

labour we should have to say with the prophet: 'I have laboured in vain; I have spent my strength for naught,' since even then we may add with him: 'Yet, surely my judgment is with the Lord, and my work with my God.'[1]

¶ There are many kinds of lie, but everybody knows that statistics may easily be the very worst kind of all, and it is well that all who are interested in foreign missions should remember that. One of the most touching of all missionary stories is one concerning the late Master of Balliol. A certain Geronimo of Genoa, having heard that the Australian aborigines were the lowest type of savages of the earth, went out and worked among them for twenty years without making a single convert or even an approach to one. The story was told to Dr. Jowett, and he replied very earnestly, 'I should like to have been that man.'[2]

The Coming of Christ.

Ja. v. 8.—'The coming of the Lord is at hand' (RV).

The greater part of the literature which we call the Bible was called forth by, and has relation to, the special circumstances of those to whom it was in the first instance addressed. Scripture, it is true, contains a revelation for all time. It has lessons for the men of every nation and of every age. But it is no less true that its writers had in view the needs of no age but their own. Take, for instance, the New Testament apart from the Gospels. The greater part of it is a collection of letters addressed to Churches or to individual Christians. Why were they written? Because occasions arose on which certain persons and certain communities needed advice, or reproof, or exhortation. Their teaching is still profitable in these later days. But it cannot help us as it should, since we cannot really understand it unless we know something of those to whom it was given, unless we comprehend their difficulties in faith or in practice, their beliefs and modes of thought, unless, as we read, we can put ourselves in their place.

It will not, therefore, be amiss if we try to realize what were the thoughts of Christians in Apostolic days about the Second Coming of the Lord.

1. In the first place, the coming of Christ was to them something which might be expected to take place in the near future. Most, if not all, of them thought that before their own generation had passed away Christ would return, and would again take His place among His people. We know, of course, that in this belief the early Church was mistaken. More than eighteen centuries have passed, and our Lord has not yet appeared. His Advent seems as far away as ever. But, mistaken as the belief was, it was a very real one. It died hard. And as the years passed by, and brought its refutation with them, Christian men were sorely perplexed. They had lived in this hope of the speedy return of their Lord; it had become for them almost an article of the Faith; they had grounded it upon His own words; and now His promise seemed to fail them. The scoffers among whom they lived had their momentary triumph. 'Where is the promise of His coming?' they cried; 'for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.' And what answer could the Christians give? Had they not boasted that the day was at hand when the kingdoms of the world would become the Kingdom of the Lord and of His Christ; when the faith of the gospel should be once and for ever vindicated against all opposers? The Apostle could only remind them that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. To them it might seem that the promise was delayed; but with God, in spite of all seeming, there is no delay.

2. The early Christians, then, expected the Second Advent in the near future. But it was not only thus that their view of it diff-

[1] H. P. Liddon.
[2] John Kelman, *Some Aspects of International Christianity*, 205.

ered from ours. They looked forward to it as an event of joy and gladness. Have we not in very truth almost forgotten to associate happiness with the coming of the Christ? If we have not come to regard it as something so remote that it scarcely needs to be thought of at all, do we not conceive of it mainly as a day of wrath? The mention of it brings to our minds the judgment-seat—the opening of the Books—the terrors of an awakened conscience—the awful disclosure of secret and forgotten sins—the fearful sentence, 'Depart from me, ye cursed.' We anticipate the coming of Christ, not with joy and hope, but with dread and dismay. It was far otherwise with the men to whom Paul, James, and Peter wrote. It is impossible for us to give a real meaning to their statements, unless we remember that with them the one thought which overpowered all others in the contemplation of the return of Christ was the *joy* of the reunion of the Church with her Lord.

Take, for instance, that grand passage from the first Epistle to the Thessalonians (iv. 13-18). The Thessalonians looked for the Day of the Lord as near at hand; but already the delay in its approach had caused them sorrow. As month after month passed, death was working among them. One after another those whom they loved were being taken. As they laid them in the tomb, they knew, indeed, that they were but asleep—asleep in Jesus; and in that knowledge the cruel sting of death had lost its power. But, alas! what deep sorrow yet remained! Were those dear ones still to be asleep when the Lord returned? Were they to be shut out from the unspeakable gladness of the meeting of Christ with His people? Was the joy of that day only for those who should be alive when it came? No, cries the Apostle; the joy shall be theirs as well as ours; we shall have no advantage over them. 'For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the *dead* in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.' The Advent would be a time of unutterable joy, in which quick and dead alike would have their part.

3. And, once again, this coming of the Lord, to which men looked forward with such joyful hope, was to be no isolated event, unconnected with all that went before. The Second Coming is the counterpart and the complement of the First. That which was begun in the stall at Bethlehem will be completed when Christ at length establishes the throne of His glory, and reigns in bodily presence over His Church. For how much still remained to be accomplished! How fervently the children of the Kingdom still needed to pray that the Kingdom might come! The Kingdom of Christ! Was not it the Kingdom in which mercy and truth should meet together—in which righteousness and peace should kiss each other? It was a Kingdom of peace; and yet men fought and made war. It was a Kingdom of righteousness and mercy; yet still the wicked oppressed the good—still wrong and robbery prevailed. But the Lord would come. Then the Kingdom which by His First Coming He had inaugurated would be completed and made perfect. Then all irregularities would be redressed; then both good and bad would receive their due reward; then, at last, mercy and truth would meet together, righteousness and peace would kiss each other.[1]

¶ In every age the Church has cherished the same quenchless hope. Faithful souls in each generation watched wistfully for the day of the Lord, and loved His appearing. They reaffirmed the ancient faith, 'We believe that Thou shalt come'; and they died, not having received the promise, but having been persuaded of it and having embraced it from afar. Indeed the contrast between the Church's expectation and its perpetual disappointment has become a stumbling block to not a few believers. Does not history in this matter give the lie to faith? Christ has never come

[1] H. J. Lawlor, *Thoughts on Belief and Life*, 2ff.

again, in the fashion in which His first disciples expected to behold Him, before they should taste of death.

The key to the contradiction, as a wise teacher suggested, may lie in our human infirmity. We have no skill to harmonize things that are temporal with things that are eternal. Because of the illusion of these mortal years we are forced to think of a past and of a future which have no place in God's everlasting Now.[1]

How will Christ come back again,
How will He be seen, and where,
  Where His chosen way?
Will He come in dead of night,
Shining in His robes of light,
  Or at dawn of day?

Will it be at Christmas time,
When the bells are all achime,
  That He is re-born?
Or will He return and bring
Wide and wondrous wakening
  On some Easter morn?

When will this sad world rejoice,
Listening to that golden voice
  Speaking unto men?
Lives there one who yet shall cry
Loud to startled passers-by—
'Christ has come again'?

List the answer—Christ is here!
Seek and you shall find Him near—
  Dwelling on the earth.
By the world's awakened thought,
This great miracle is wrought,
  This the second birth.

While you wonder where and how
Christ shall come—behold Him *now*,
  Patient, loving, meek.
Looking from your neighbour's eyes,
Or in humble toiling guise—
  Lo! the Christ you seek.

Look for Him in human hearts,
In the shops, and in the marts,
  And beside your hearth.
Search and speak the watchword Love,
And the Christ shall rise and prove
  He has come to earth.

Sorrowful ofttimes is He
That we have not eyes to see,
  Have not ears to hear,
As we call to Him afar,
Out beyond some distant star,
  While He stands so near.

Seek Him, seek Him, where He dwells,
Chime the voices of the bells
  On the Christmas air.
Christ has come to earth again,
He is in the hearts of men,
  Seek and find Him there.[1]

[1] T. H. Darlow, *At Home in the Bible*, 308.

The Judge and His Judgment.

Ja. v. 9.—'Behold, the judge standeth before the door.'

1. This generation has altogether lost the fear of judgment. This has come about because the dramatic and pictorial assize of the Last Judgment has gradually failed to hold our imagination. We cannot imagine it; therefore it is impossible. To summon the dead, small and great, before the judgment seat of Christ would require a very large place and a very long time, when all the impressiveness of the event would be lost. We have discovered that these ideas are derived from quite non-authoritative sources, and that Biblical inspiration does not guarantee the details of the picture, indeed demands a symbolical interpretation. And we have not the imagination to construct an equally impressive picture out of the spiritual truth which remains over. If we are told that the judgment is always going on, then we comfort ourselves with the assurance that there will be nothing sudden, irrevocable, catastrophic and overwhelming about that judgment. It will be infinitely less terrible than the pictures that used to frighten our youthful dreams.

Something of the decline of fear of judgment is due to an emasculated conception of

[1] Ella Wheeler Wilcox, *Poems of Optimism*, 133.

God. God is love; therefore He would never do anything unkind. We turn away from the horrible imagination of past ages, with their ideas of awful suffering, overwhelming shame and total exclusion, as those who awaken from a dark and evil dream only to find the sun shining and the air full of song. And all this without considering what it was that prompted these awful fears, forgetting that these things were not the subject of suspected revelation, or the inventions of cruel theologians, but the intuitions of the common mind in every age. God is love, but we must distinguish that pure and awful passion from the lazy toleration and the mistaken kindness which is often miscalled love by men. If the judgment is to be only for revelation of the truth, only for cleansing from sin, only for discovery of our need, are we such lovers of the truth, so pure in heart, and so aware of ourselves that these processes are certain to be pleasant in our case?

Where the thought of God has been kept strong by an intermingling of justice with mercy, of severity with tenderness, then an effeminate conception of Christ has come in to provide a refuge from the wrath of God. Christ has been made into a shield against relentless justice, a substitute for the awful demand of the moral ideal. And when modern thought has turned from this as untrue, it has rather rejected all sternness from God than recognized that Christ actually mediates these things to our hearts. He brings the fire within, He cleanses the wound with salt, He drenches the jaded eye with light. Our picture of Jesus owes too much to a feeble and sentimental art, and far too little to the picture of the Gospels and the Apocalypse. The rebuke of His words, the more awful rebuke of His life, the world-shattering rebuke of His cross—here is the Judge actually come amongst us.

2. Christ only intensifies what all life is, and life itself is a judgment. Life gradually brings out the hidden tendencies of character. We endeavour to hide ourselves from our neighbour, from God and from our own consciousness; we think that our secret dalliance with evil thoughts, our internal compromise, our policy of procrastination, our shirking cowardice will go undetected. But some crisis will be sure to discover exactly what we are. Life is full of surprises and unexpected developments. Nothing can finally insure us against our predominant intent being revealed. There is nothing hidden within that will not work out to the surface.

Life adds confirmation to the choices we make. Our one idea of judgment is that of the arbitrary infliction of punishment, and this begets in us a lurking sense of injustice. Nothing could be more false. God's judgment simply joins the links we forge, it only gives us what we ask for. As we choose, life responds to our choice; only it multiplies what we choose, and naturally choice excludes incompatible things. You cannot have both wealth and freedom, luxurious comfort and the power of endurance, cynicism and affection, selfishness and power over others.

It is held by many that there are elements of final choice in life. We choose to go up or down, and increasing momentum at length carries us past any reversal of direction. We are here to be judged worthy of further life or not worthy of life at all. The seed of immortality may be killed within us. The next life may mean an even swifter ripening of tendencies we have managed to repress, because the restraints of earth will be taken away. There is larger freedom and less limit there; but that would only mean death for some. This is what many sincere thinkers hold to be the teaching of both reason and revelation. No one has the right to dogmatize. There is, however, one other consideration.

3. Ultimately we are in the hands, not of life, but of a Judge. A Person and not a process is the ultimate reality with which we have to deal. That means one who understands our personality, who will deal with us neither arbitrarily nor mechanically. An attitude to a person can be changed; the heart can be touched by a heart. Because God is, and is the final reality, there is always hope.

This is the meaning of the New Testament doctrine that Jesus is to be the final Judge. This is often reckoned a corruption of theology: surely it is the wisest of intuitions. He was a judge while He was here, and He does not change. Judgment is committed to Him because He is a Son of man. He knows what life means; He has felt the strength of temptation, and that He has won where we have failed is rather on our side than against us. For it is not the strong, but the weak, who are cruel; not those who have prevailed, but those who have failed, who are harshest in condemning others. It means that behind the judgment there is mercy. If He comes to separate, it is to make things clear, to show us where our ways are leading. If He excludes us from His presence, surely it will be to teach us how sore our need of Him really is. He cannot be different on the throne from what He was on the cross; stern, heart-breaking, awful Judge, yet merciful and tender through and through.

We dare not then exclude a final hope, but it is not a hope to presume upon. The farther away, the farther back. If the wrong is done against a Person, all the more suffering before things can be put right. We must feel all that we have inflicted before there can be atonement. But we never can feel that, unless the Person reveals what has been suffered. He will show us the wounds, and we shall feel them in ourselves. Surely there will be healing in them as well as pain. There is no assurance even of final salvation for any of us save in this, that looking upon Him on the Cross we feel drawn to Him and long to love Him. Then we shall have little fear when we see Him on the throne. If we have seen the glory of the Cross and have longed to share it, we may be able to bear the burning light of His unveiled countenance.[1]

I saw no thronged angelic court, I saw no great white throne,
I saw no open Judgment books, I seemed to stand alone.
I seemed to stand alone beside a solemn sounding sea,
While, at my feet upon the shore, broke waves of memory.
Their murmuring music sobbed and sought a way into my soul,
The perfect past was present there, and I could see it whole,
Its beauty and its ugliness, its sorrow and its sin,
Its splendour and its sordidness, as wave on wave rolled in
. . . . . .
He stood with me beside the sea, and listened to its moan.
I did not dare to raise my eyes, I feared what I might see,
A cold sweat broke and bathed my brow, I longed to turn and flee,
But could not; rooted there I stood, in shiv'ring shame and fear.
The subtle shadow substance took, and nearer came, and near.
O was it days, or was it years, we stood beside that sea,
Or was it æons, timeless times? It seemed eternity.
At last, compelled, I raised my eyes. Two eyes looked into mine,
And shattered all my soul with shame, so sad and so divine.
It palsied all my pride with pain, the terror of those tears,
And wrought into my soul the woe of all my wasted years.
Depart from me, I cried, depart, I cannot stand with Thee
And face the sorrow of those eyes, beside this cruel sea.
Depart from me, I dare not tread the sands those feet have trod,
Nor look into those eyes that tell the agony of God.
For there is written all the tale of my soul's trait'rous tryst,
The sordidness of sin that seared the splendid eyes of Christ.
Depart, I cried, and He was gone. I stood there all alone,

[1] W. E. Orchard, *Advent Sermons*, 207ff.

In silence save that Memory's sea still made
perpetual moan.
Night shadowed all, and wandering winds
came wailing from afar,
But out across the darkening sea shone forth
one single star.[1]

The Example of the Prophets.

Ja. v. 10.—'Take, my brethren, the prophets who have spoken in the name of the Lord for an example.'

What was a prophet? Many of us are content with a very superficial notion of the part played in actual life by those men. We are apt to think of a prophet simply and solely as a man who predicted things that were going to happen—incidents and events that were to fall out in the unfolding of history. The prophets did a vast deal more than that, and the very essence, and life, and grandeur of their character and conduct appear only in a small fragment in that portion of their office. Their real movement and meaning are in quite another department.

If we wish to know what a prophet is, we may, first of all, take the names given to the prophets in the Bible. Then, again, we may remember who were the prophets. And then we may take the writings, the records of their deeds, the history that tells of their fortunes.

1. What are the names given to a prophet in the Old Testament? The first and holiest is 'a man of God'—'the man of God.' All that that tells us is that in a peculiar sense the prophet belonged to God. The next name is 'the servant of God.' That tells us that he belonged to God in the sense of serving God, doing things for God. Then he is called 'the ambassador (or 'the messenger') of God.' That tells us that he served God by bringing messages from God. Then he is called 'an interpreter.' That tells us that he made men understand God's message. The next name that we come to is 'a seer,' connected with the word 'watchman.' It means one who saw what other men could not see, who saw into God's mind. It tells us how he got to know his message, how he learnt it; it was by insight, by seeing into the hidden, underlying purposes of God. The last name of all is that which we translate 'prophet,' and it literally means a man who bubbles up and runs over, whose heart gushes out in the sense of pouring out what is poured into him. It tells us that he pours out to other men what he has learnt; and it adds this shade of meaning (the very form of the Hebrew word does so), that he is, as it were, spoken through; it does not end with himself, nor does it take its rise within himself, but it comes into him like a flood, and it overflows; he cannot help himself; he is possessed, he is pressed; he is compelled to utter what his God tells him.

The names of a prophet, therefore, tell us this: he, beyond other men, has to do with God, belongs to God; he belongs to God in being God's servant; he is God's servant in being God's messenger; he is God's messenger in bringing to men things that God wants men to know; he learns what he has to tell men by seeing it himself, by knowing it, understanding it, feeling it, and then he utters it by a resistless compulsion and impulse, a pressure being put on him to tell what God has taught him. Already we have got the thought of a man with a grandeur, a greatness, a significance, and a meaning immensely above that of a man who can tell where an axe that has been lost is to be found, or whether a sick person will die or live, or whether a town is going to be destroyed or not. What we have is a living, breathing channel of communication between the great God in heaven and the human hearts of men on earth.

¶ India had her ascetics who hid away in the forests that they might subdue the flesh and merge the spirit in the infinite; China had her gracious wise men, those placid grandsires, who taught civic morality to peasant and emperor alike; Greece had her philosophers who, in the shade of graceful porticoes, developed harmonious systems and dug dialectical pitfalls; Rome had her lawgivers who

[1] G. A. Studdert Kennedy, *Rough Rhymes of a Padre*, 85.

engraved on bronze, for all time and for all generations, those rules for the highest form of justice to which a code can attain; the Middle Ages had their preachers who strove to arouse sleepy Christianity by reminding it of the Passion and of the terrors of hell. The Jewish people had their prophets. . . .

The Hebrew prophet is a voice that cries aloud, a hand that writes. A voice heard in the palaces of kings and in the mountain caves; upon the threshold of the Temple and in the city's public places; a voice that prays, a prayer that threatens, a threat overflowing with divine hope. His heart is oppressed with sadness, his mouth is full of censure, his arm is stretched out to point at punishment. He suffers for his people, and because he loves them he inveighs against them, threatens them, that they may be induced to mend their ways. Besides the gospel of slaughter and fire he preaches that of resurrection and of life, of victory and beatitude, the kingdom of the new David and the Covenant that shall endure for ever. . . .

The prophet is a voice speaking in God's name; a hand writing under God's guidance; a messenger sent by God to warn those who have lost their way, those who have disregarded the Covenant and failed to keep good watch. He is God's secretary, interpreter and ambassador, and, as such, greater than the king who does not obey the Lord, than the priest who misinterprets His word, than the philosopher who denies His existence, than the people who have forsaken Him to follow after false gods of wood or stone.[1]

2. Then, who were the prophets? Moses was a prophet, the greatest of all the Old Testament prophets. He was a prophet because of his whole life-work, not because once or twice he predicted a thing that was going to happen. Because he was the moulder and the maker of Israel, the giver to them of all their knowledge about God contained in God's law, therefore Moses was a prophet. Samuel was a prophet; Saul the king was a prophet for one night. Isaiah was a prophet; Daniel was a prophet. Christ was *the* Prophet, and the complete Prophet. How? Because He foretold the doom of Jerusalem? Because He foretold His own death? Undoubtedly because He did those things; but that was not why He was *the* Prophet. Why was it? A very excellent book, the *Shorter Catechism*, puts it this way: 'Jesus Christ is a Prophet in making known to us the mind and will of God for our salvation.'

3. A prophet, then, is a man who knows the character of the true and living God; and, because he knows and loves Him, and is living with Him, makes other men know Him, and feel Him, and understand Him too.

The man, the father, the teacher, the preacher, who takes the prophets as an example, who would play his destined part in his own little home, in his own Sunday-school class, in his own congregation, in his own neighbourhood, in the great world round about him, must be a man who knows God; must be a man who feels God to be all about him. He must be a man who will make others know that God is living, and moving, and loving in the events of his own time. He must be a man who recognizes God in the providences of his own life; he must be a man who does not shape his conduct for earthly gain or for social advantage; he must be a man despising all these things; a man who says, 'God bids me live as He lives—though I sacrifice friends and home, I *must* tell this truth; though all men should be against me, yet I must speak it, for I have learnt it of God.' Such a man has life in him, Divine life; he has honesty; he is a true man; he is a man who is not of the world; he is a man who is not a mere self-seeker. That man does God's work on earth.

¶ Fox touched all classes, the very poorest and the 'well to passe'; but his chief numerical support was found among mechanics and those 'not above the degree of yeoman.' And from among these came the Quaker Evangelists. 'For in our day,' wrote Barclay in his *Apology*, 'God hath raised up witnesses for himself as he did the fishermen of old; many, yea, most of whom are labouring and

[1] Giovanni Papini, *The Story of Christ*, 29, 30.

mechanic men, who, altogether without that [scholastic] learning, have, by the power and Spirit of God, struck at the very root and ground of Babylon; and in the strength and might of this power have gathered thousands, by reaching their consciences, into the same power and life; who, as to the outward part, have been far more knowing than they, yet not able to resist the virtue that proceeded from them. Of which I myself am a true witness; and can declare from certain experience, because my heart has been often greatly broken and tendered by that virtuous life that proceeded from the powerful ministry of those illiterate men; so that by their very countenances, as well as words, I have felt the evil in me often chained down, and the good reached to and raised.'[1]

Live Christ!—and all thy life shall be
A highway of delivery—
A royal road of goodly deeds,
Gold-paved with sweetest charity.

Live Christ!—and all thy life shall be
A sweet uplifting ministry,
A sowing of the fair white seeds
That fruit through all eternity.[2]

The Patience of Job.

Ja. v. 11.—'Ye have heard of the patience of Job.'

'THE patience of Job' has become proverbial. But when we turn to the story, and read the Book as a whole, we may well ask, Is that the picture of a patient man who accepts without murmuring or complaint all the evils that befall him? On the contrary, as one of the best commentators on this passage remarks, 'Job is not an example of what we should call patience except in his first acceptance of calamity. We should rather say that his complaint in chapter iii., when he curses the day on which he was born, his indignation against his friends for their want of faith in him, his agony at the thought that God had forsaken him, were symptoms of an extremely sensitive, vehement and impatient character, which had little of Christian gentleness in it, but excites our admiration by its passionate outbursts of exalted feeling.'

There is but one phrase of his at the beginning of his speaking—before he had been irritated by the religious lies of his friends—which has the note of our teacher's idea of patience, and which contains all that is true in that idea, 'The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.' And to the thought and emotion which underlie those words Job, in spite of all his wrath and confusion, was throughout true.

1. The first and finest element of his patience, and of ours, in the midst of the troubles of life appears in that phrase; but those words are only one and a passing form of a single idea, or rather a single belief, which, as Job's trouble went on, expressed itself in many forms. That one belief—and it is the root-element of true patience—is this: the conviction that God is just, the faith that it is impossible for Him to do wrong. 'Whatever happens,' Job thought, 'to me or to all the world, He is right; my woes are contained in His order, in His will, and both order and will are righteous.' 'Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?' That wild question reveals in its momentary doubt the depth of his belief. It was this that made him say, 'The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.' It was the doubt of this, intruded into his soul by those maxim-mongers, which maddened him into those grim challenges of God; it was this that he maintained from point to point as the struggle deepened. 'I do not understand,' he cried, 'anything that has now happened to me. I cannot find God in what has been, nor in what is; there seems neither justice nor love in all my world. But though I do not comprehend, though everything I suffer seem unrighteous, I will maintain, I will believe, that God is right. Heaven and earth may perish, and I with them, but, as long as He is

[1] H. G. Wood, *George Fox*, 79.
[2] John Oxenham.

just, nothing I care for in the depths of my soul has really perished.'

2. This is a true patience; and to keep it is worth all the struggle, the torment, and the passion which Job created and underwent. Indeed, it is the only consolation really worth having in dire trouble. Human sympathy is good. It is well to feel that God loves us, that we have One who is touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but deeper even than these—for enduring comfort and strength, for the fortitude and fortification of the soul, for the final victory—is the firm belief that all that has happened is right, is contained in God's everlasting justice, belongs to a righteous order, and therefore ministers to our good and the good of the whole world. Our woes and wrongs are within law, or of law. God ordered them, for He could not do otherwise. He could not change them without doing what would violate His root-ideas, and therefore what was unjust to the whole creation.

(1) Suppose that we are punished for some wrong or error, some guilty or innocent violation of law, and eat the fruits of our own devices—and bitter they are, apples of the Sodom shore. There is only one comfort in it. It is according to law. God has not done it because He is in a fit of arbitrary anger with us, but exactly in the same way as He makes corn come out of corn, and thorn out of thorn. Law, not caprice, has punished. And this is comfort, stern comfort, but it brings with it a hope that no weaker comfort brings—a sure and certain hope. For then we know that we have only to change our devices, to do the opposite of our sin, in order to get, also by the same just law, another kind of fruit, what men call reward—not by any means the removal of pain, but the fruit in the spirit of our spiritual effort—the ennobling, the purification, of the soul.

(2) Again, we have done right, and suffered for it at the hands of the unrighteous world. 'What,' we say, 'is this just? Why am I afflicted, tortured?' There is one comfort worth having, and it is the same. It is according to law. The order of the universe of spirit requires it. There is someone who is better for my pain, and there is something which it sets right. It is just, and for the sake of mankind; it is needed for their redemption. It is not the blind caprice of Nature. 'Therefore we pray, "God my Father, not my will, but Thine be done. Better I should suffer than that universal justice should be delayed or hampered in its work upon the whole."'

A Rose, in tatters on the garden path,
Cried out to God and murmured 'gainst His Wrath,
Because a sudden wind at twilight's hush
Had snapped her stem alone of all the bush.
And God, Who hears both sun-dried dust and sun,
Had pity, whispering to that luckless one.
'Sister, in that thou sayest We did not well—
What voices heardst thou when thy petals fell?'
And the Rose answered, 'In that evil hour
A voice said, "Father, wherefore falls the flower?
For lo, the very gossamers are still."
And a voice answered, "Son, by Allah's will!"'

Then softly as a rain-mist on the sward,
Came to the Rose the Answer of the Lord:
'Sister, before We smote the dark in twain,
Ere yet the stars saw one another plain,
Time, Tide, and Space, We bound unto the task
That thou shouldst fall, and such an one should ask,'
Whereat the withered flower, all content,
Died as they die whose days are innocent;
While he who questioned why the flower fell
Caught hold of God and saved his soul from Hell.

(3) Once more. Those whom we have loved have been taken from our grasp, and our life seems to have left us with them. 'We have served God well,' we say; 'is this His answer? Then I have cleansed my heart *in vain,* and washed my hands in innocency.' There is no

[1] Kipling.

comfort, but a deeper misery, in that thought. But there is a grave comfort when we believe that not in caprice, or in a fanciful testing, does the bereavement occur, but with the knowledge of a far-seeing justice. Our loved ones were taken from us according to law; we could not have kept them; their hour had come to die; and if they perished by law on earth, they are still subject to that just law in the other world. In the all-wise hands of absolute Right we may safely leave them; and our own life also, and our sorrow. He will do what is just and fitting for us, for them, and for the whole.

There is comfort in being sure that these sorrowful things must have been; that God could not have changed them without changing Himself; that, if He had changed them, there would be no surety in His love, no possibility of trusting Him; for how could we trust His love, or repose on His justice, if we did not first trust His order? Better the worst of pain than the impossibility of trust in an all-embracing certainty, than leaning on possible capriciousness; better the most desolate of solitudes than not to be able to say: 'I know He will not change His order; I know I can depend on Him'; for then there is no solitude in our soul. Then we can say with Christ, 'I am not alone: the Father is with me.'[1]

¶ The little group of students in Manchester College found him delightfully genial in their Junior Common Room, and they knew how to respect the feeling that could not always be stoically restrained. After the loss of his daughter one of them recalls that there came a lecture in the midst of which a reference to the discipline of life's deeper experiences proved too much for him, and he caught the grief that welled up in his soul and was dumb for a few seconds before he could proceed. Then with courageous self-control he added, 'But it is always the Angel of sorrow that lifts for us the veil that hangs before the Holy of Holies.'[2]

[1] S. A. Brooke, *The Onward Cry*, 205ff.
[2] H. J. W. Hetherington, *The Life and Letters of Sir Henry Jones*, 111.

If it were but some little thing
  Our Lord saw fit to take away,
A wound with but a slender sting,
  A trouble lasting but a day,
A pang that could be cured ere long—
How could our human faith grow strong?

But when He takes our heart's desire
  All in a moment's agony,
Our spirits pass within the fire,
  And think that surely they must die;
Yet walking in that fierce despair
Find they can trust Him even there.

Nor few are they who thus have seen,
  Although with bitter weeping blind,
That never that dear Lord hath been
  Before so tender or so kind;
No sunny hours could ever prove,
As proves this night of storms, His love.

We know not how His comforts come,
  We see no wondrous Form appear,
We feel no Hand—the world is dumb,
  And yet we know He draweth near;
And as He toucheth us—that hour
The agony has lost its power.

Nor ever, though our life be long,
  And new delights should bring their aid,
Can we forget Who made us strong,
  And bid us never be afraid;
Who chose that dark and fearful place,
To let us see Him face to face.[1]

The Process and the End.

Ja. v. 11.—'Ye have . . . seen the end of the Lord.'

James here, as we remember, refers to Job. He briefly sums up the memorable book which bears that name under two headings, 'the patience of Job,' and 'the end of the Lord.' Terribly did the patriarch suffer. Not always did he suffer well; some sorrowful words, some even deplorable words, escaped him in his bewilderment of loss and misery, physical and mental. But on the whole, in a very wonderful way, he had 'patience'; he persisted in the

[1] J. E. A. Brown.

conviction that the eternal Judge was on the side of right, not wrong, though the temptations to think the opposite seemed to crowd around his darkened eyes. Then at length the Lord interposed in direct remonstrance with His servant. He brought him to his knees in complete confession and surrender by a path which we certainly should not have forecast, the manifestation of His inscrutable wisdom and power in the glories of creation. However, to his knees Job was brought, breathing out words which are now immortal as the voice of the awakened soul; 'Mine eye seeth thee, wherefore I abhor myself.' Then comes 'the end of the Lord.' He turns towards His servant in a benign and wonderful reversal of his sorrows, yes, and a more than reversal. He gives him the splendid privilege of being the prevailing intercessor for his misguided friends, and then heaps upon him a rich abundance of temporal mercies, lighted up with the light of the smile and peace of God.

There is a message here which reaches far beyond the particular circumstances. Is not this view of the character of our gracious God, as it comes out in 'the end of the Lord,' a view to suggest encouragement to troubled faith under innumerable varieties of trouble? Does it not suggest to us the weight and truth of the often repeated appeals of Scripture, not least in the Psalms, 'to 'wait for the Lord'? 'Blessed are all they that wait for him.' 'My soul, wait thou only upon God.' 'Since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside thee, what he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him.' 'Said I not unto thee that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?' 'What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter.'

1. The teaching of the passage is very simple; and yet there is no lesson that our time needs more than this, for it is a rebuke to our tendency to pronounce judgment upon an intermediate process as if we were dealing with the final problem. We take up an unfinished article of manufacture, with its tangled, ragged edges, and its coarse and unattractive appearance. 'Call this the fruit of design!' we say. To our eyes it is so shapeless that we may go so far as to say that there is no evidence of a design in it, or if there is, it is a blundering and ineffectual piece of work, and proves either a lack of power in the designer or else a breakdown in the machinery. The simple fact, of course, is that it is unfinished. We do not hold the key to the whole design. We prematurely, and unjustly pronounce judgment upon the unfinished product, crude and imperfect, as if it bore all the final touches of the master's hand. Impatience is always injustice.

If we were to go to-day into the operating-room of one of the great hospitals, we might see things that would make us shudder and suffer an agony of terror and of horror. Our first impression would be that this kind of work was the devil's business, and that it could not possibly be full of pity and mercy. But possibly months after this we meet the very person who was the subject of the operation, and we discover that he is now free from pain, rejoicing in a new lease of health and life, and we begin to deplore the harshness and the folly of our rash and impatient judgment. We see clearly now that to condemn, as if it were the end, what is only a painful intermediate state is an unpardonable injustice.

2. 'But is suffering necessary?' somebody says. 'Could not God have done without it?' We need not go into that question, for the reason that whatever we say we shall always end here—that we cannot price character in the currency of pain. All we know is this, the tender heart, the humble spirit, the earnest, chastened temper, the sense of a Divine love constraining through all the extremities of affliction—there are no gains in all the world that are comparable to them; nor is there any other way to acquire them than through pain. To this all the painful intermediate process is leading up. We did not see it at the time. We thought faith was being taken away when it was only being reconstructed.

We thought character was being blighted when it was only being chastened and strengthened. We judged by the process when we should have waited for the product—the goal of God. The Lord is full of pity and mercy.

¶ When sometimes in a quiet hour I try to gather up my own reminiscences of the bereavements through which I have known Christian people pass, I am astonished at the impressive uniformity of testimony. There are always circumstances of mercy. Even the most stunned from the blow are able to realize that the hand that has smitten them is merciful. Sometimes the insight comes only with the fleeting of the years in the final retrospect. We grow surer and more confident as the years go by that, however the present appearances deceive us, if we could see the end it would be merciful. Yes, there are lighted torches enough in life if only we had the courage and the wisdom to walk by them.

A young fellow in one of the London hospitals, suffering from the consequences of his own folly and self-indulgence, said to the visiting doctor, who mentioned it to me, 'Sir, God Almighty writes a very plain hand.' He does. The mercy of the providential order of His universe is that sin never goes unpunished. The punishment is not always so open for everyone to see as in the case I have indicated, and for this reason. No human eye can watch by the death-bed of an ideal. No physician can operate for cataract of the soul. Men who seek the world and gain it do not always lose their souls, but as it has been ably said, 'they always lose soul.' That is part of the penalty they pay, the punishment they endure. They may not trouble about it at the time, but when some day they have the leisure and the disposition to read the moral of their lives, it is very legible. God Almighty writes a very plain hand. They can hardly fail to see that the law of degeneration which they have despised is not a law of cruelty and vengeance, but a law of mercy and of love which would fain have gathered them under its wings, but they would not.[1]

[1] C. S. Horne, in *The British Congregationalist*, August 14, 1913.

Straightforward Speech.

Ja. v. 12.—'Let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay.'

This monosyllabic text, which calls us to a monosyllabic life, gives us one of the manifold definitions of the Christian life. The Christian life is a life of truth-speaking. It is a life in which our words match our thoughts, and our thoughts fit the facts. This is not a peculiar definition of the Christian life; neither is it a trivial definition. The faculty of speech is the greatest gift of God to man, and by no other faculty can we make the power of God which dwells within us so largely felt by our fellow-men.

The text is radical; it goes down to the roots of human life. Its brief words weigh tons. They strike all hypocrisy out of life. They strike all compromise with evil out of life. They compel a man to take sides in every great struggle between right and wrong, between truth and error, between the wholesome and the hurtful, between the genuine and the false. We must give an unhesitating 'yea' to the cause of good in the world—*i.e.*, our allegiance to the cause of good must be one of absolute loyalty and of complete self-surrender; and we must give an uncompromising and unchangeable 'nay' to the solicitation of the cause of evil in the world—*i.e.*, our opposition to evil in all its forms must be unqualified and deep-seated and fearless and manifest. We must throw ourselves against evil for all we are worth. This is what it means to be a 'yea-man' and a 'nay-man.' The terms 'yea' and 'nay' are the heaviest-charged words in human language. The spoken 'yea' is the marriage of the will to good; and the spoken 'nay' is the veto-power of the will putting the stamp of condemnation upon evil. They both carry character in them, they are both the symbols of strength and of granite fibre in a man's moral nature. When we penetrate to the lowest roots of our actions in life and find how our actions originate, we find that the seed of everything is a 'yea' or a 'nay'—*i.e.*, the seed of every

action is a *choice* or a *refusal.* Since this is so, it is essential that in our motives and in our speech and in our deeds this 'yea power' and this 'nay power' which mould and shape and develop our lives shall be truthfully and rightly exercised.

1. Let us give great care to the selection and use of words. Do we realize the power of words? Do we realize what they represent? They represent us. Our words are as much our own as our thoughts are. They are the incarnation of our thoughts, just as our body is the incarnation of our soul. If we change our words, we change our thought. Now, if we are to represent ourselves correctly, we must see to it that we choose correct words.

Our text suggests the words we ought to use —the simplest words; words which are sunbeams in human speech; words of the '*yea*' and '*nay*' order. We cannot equivocate with such words. We have got to tell the truth, or else lie out and out. These are the words that the strongest writers use. Books that deal in monosyllables are immortal. The grand and tender passages in the English Bible are those which are couched almost entirely in the words of one syllable—the twenty-third Psalm, David's lament over Saul and Jonathan, the Gospel according to John, are instances. The finest sentence ever uttered in human language is said to be that which refers to the creation of light: 'And God said, Let there be light; and there was light.' Every word in this noted sentence is a single syllable. It is with words as it is with sunbeams: the more they are condensed the deeper they burn.

¶ I do not know that I can better give you my idea of the strength and value of small words than by quoting a little poem translated from the German and published lately in *The New York School Journal.* It is unique in its way, and worth its weight in gold. It runs on this wise:

Six little words do claim me every day,
Shall, must, and *can,* with *will* and *ought* and *may.*

Shall is the law within inscribed by Heaven,
The goal to which I by myself am driven.

Must is the bound not to be overpast,
Where by the world and nature I'm held fast.

Can is the measure of my personal dower,
Of deed and art, science and practised power.

Will is my noblest crown, my brightest, best,
Freedom's own seal upon my soul imprest.

Ought the inscription on the seal set fair
On Freedom's open door, a bolt 'tis there.

And lastly *may* 'mong courses mixed,
The vaguely possible by the moment fixed.

Shall, must, and *can,* with *will* and *ought* and *may,*
These are the six that claim me every day.

Only when God doth teach do I know what each day
I shall, I must, I can, I will, I ought, I may.[1]

2. Straightforward speech and genuineness of life must have behind them a genuine and straightforward personality. My personality is the source of the life I live. My personality is the soul of what I utter. Life and speech only give expression to personality. We shall never habitually speak the truth if we aim only at speaking it; we must aim at living it. We must aim at *being* the truth. Truth must be the genius of our life. The whole world knows that behind speech is personality. The man fills his own words. Character is the latent heat in words. The man behind gives words their momentum and projectile force.

¶ In the *Iliad* Homer makes Thersites deliver a speech against Agamemnon. The speech in ink is magnificent. It is among the finest things in the *Iliad.* But it had no effect upon the troops. Its only effect was to bring down the staff of Ulysses upon the shoulders of the speaker. What was the source of weakness? The personality of Thersites. Pope says that

[1] D. Gregg, *Our Best Moods,* 102.

if Ulysses had made that speech, the troops would have sailed for Greece that very night. In engineering it is a rule that a cannon should be at least one hundred times heavier than its shot. A man's character should be a hundred times heavier than what he says. Personality both originates our words and gives them their force.

When a man has harmonized all his faculties with one another, when he has learned to love what God loves, and hate what God hates, then he is like some of those majestic representations of full-orbed human nature which Michael Angelo has given to us, or which have come to us from the ancients. A friend of mine wrote from Paris, just after he had seen some of these masterpieces: 'I stood in the basement of the Louvre the other day, and there was the Venus de Milo, and there, too, was the Sleeping Greek Slave in the marketplace, the marble creation of the artist. The man was majestic in quantity and quality of being. He had in him the possibility of power unfathomable, and yet he was tender as any drop of dew. A lion was in him, a dove also. Not only was his massiveness overpowering when you took a full view of it, but his tenderness was equally overpowering. It is easy to find a man large enough, but it is not easy to find a man of fine quality and of great size combined. The Venus, with its womanly purity and ideality, was as grand as the Greek Slave. I asked a young man, somewhat tempted by Parisian life, who was looking at these works of art: "If these people were turned out to wander round the world, would they come back dissipated?" His answer was, "They would come back without the smell of fire upon them." "How do you know?" He replied, "Look at them! They are too great to be tempted." "But," said I, "they are to go round the world; they are to be free from family police; they are to be subjected to all the temptation of modern luxury." "They would come back with not a single hair of their head singed." "How do you know?" "Look at them! They are too great to stoop." They had in them a full-orbed human nature; and that young man, no philosopher, simply a person of good practical instinct, felt that nothing can make a man who has all the wheels moving in him act against conscience and reason. The whole make-up of such a man is against this.'[1]

Anointing and Prayer.

Ja. v. 14, 15.—'Is any among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer of faith shall save him that is sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, it shall be forgiven him' (RV).

1. What is this anointing with oil that is to precede or accompany the prayer of faith? Anointing or rubbing with oil was a common practice in the first century of the Christian era. When Christ sent out His disciples, two by two, to herald His Kingdom, we read that they 'anointed with oil many that were sick and healed them.' This was a miraculous healing, yet it made use of a general practice of the time. Greek and Roman physicians recommended poultices made of wine and oil or vinegar and oil. The Good Samaritan poured oil and wine into the wounds of the man by the roadside. Josephus advised its use. Isaiah calls attention in the first chapter of his prophecy to the mollifying effect of oil. Pure oil used as an unguent is a common and useful remedy for certain diseases even to this day. As this was one of the best remedial agents of his time, James recommends its use as a physician might prescribe any medicine at the present day. Works accompany prayer. Physicians and nurses should leave no means untried that experience pronounces of avail, or that may help to the recovery of the sick.

2. Consider, next, the prayer of faith. Whose faith? Manifestly the faith of him who offers the prayer. The expression allows of no other interpretation. It is a prayer offered by a believer in Christ; to be more explicit, by the elder who has been summoned to the bedside. This interpretation, however, does not pre-

[1] D. Gregg, *Our Best Moods*, 88ff.

clude faith on the part of the sick. James is writing to Christians. In the beginning of his letter he calls them brethren. The sick man has manifested his faith in sending for the elders of the church. They are present in response to his call. Unless he had faith in prayer and believed that the effectual fervent prayer of the righteous man availeth much, he would not have called them to his bedside. The prayer of faith, then, is the earnest supplication of the man of God, entreating the Lord to heal, for it is He who forgiveth all our iniquities, and healeth all our diseases.

3. Again we read: 'The prayer of faith shall save him that is sick, and the Lord shall raise him up.' Does this saying refer to bodily healing or to soul salvation? Without doubt to the former, for the Apostle goes on to say that if the sick man 'have committed sins, it shall be forgiven him.' Soul restoration accompanies bodily healing, and both these blessed gifts come in answer to the prayer of faith. James does not say they *may* come. He is very emphatic. They *shall* come. Are we then to understand that any prayer offered in faith by the bedside of any person, or at least of any Christian, will be followed by recovery from illness and by Divine forgiveness? If this were so, death from sickness would be speedily banished from any Christian community, for some godly man might surely be found willing to pray in faith by the bedside of every invalid. If you insist that the sick man must also be a holy man, then there are scores of devout, earnest workers for Christ whom the Church would not suffer to die. And yet good men whose recovery is prayed for earnestly by other good men die daily. How, then, shall we reconcile the promise of James with the well-known facts of life? To this several answers are given.

(1) First: there are those who claim that this promise of James is meant to apply only to the Apostolic Church. The Apostles and some other disciples had extraordinary and miraculous powers given them of God. 'In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.' These miraculous gifts continued for some time in the Church until the need had passed. Such miracles were the tolling of the bell to call men to hear the sermon. They were witnesses to the truth of the gospel. They were necessary in laying foundations. Now that God has abundantly confirmed the truth, they are no longer needed, and this injunction of James has, therefore, no special force; neither may one expect these results to follow the prayer of faith at the present time. There is some truth in this explanation, but it is not the whole truth.

(2) Second: there are those who claim that this gift of miraculous healing following the prayer of faith has not been wholly lost to the Church. They assert that all through the Christian centuries, and even at the present time, God has bestowed this apostolic gift on certain individuals to keep alive a knowledge of His power. They relate instance after instance of wonderful cures in answer to prayer. Everyone has heard of them. Were it necessary, volumes of testimony could be obtained. When Luther heard that his friend Myconius was dying he fell on his knees: 'O Lord, my God, no! Thou must not yet take our brother, Myconius, to Thyself. Thy cause will not prosper without him. Amen.' Then he rose and wrote: 'There is no cause for fear, dear Myconius, the Lord will not let me hear thou art dead. You shall not and must not die. Amen.' This letter roused Myconius in such a manner and produced such an impression that 'the ulcer in his lung discharged itself and he recovered.' Luther's prayer was the prayer of faith, the prayer that never wavered.

Dr. Deems, in upholding this view in his book upon the Epistle of James, *The Gospel of Common-Sense*, says that in such answers to prayer three things seem to have always concurred when the Presbyter has been called: '(1) The impression has been powerfully made that prayer should be offered for the entire recovery of the patient. (2)

The patient has concurred in this impression and united in the prayer for his own recovery. (3) The person so recovered was duly and truly penitent for all his sins, and seeking forgiveness for them as a thing much more important than his restoration to physical health.' Thus guarded, this view will meet with general approval. There is nothing in Scripture that limits the power of God to any time. In fact, we believe that from time to time God does hear prayer and raise up a man from sickness, even after his recovery has seemed impossible to skilful physicians. The trouble comes from the perversion of this doctrine. It leads to the 'setting up of faith shops and the peddling out of faith cures.' It leads some so far as to believe it is a sin to use any remedy for the sick, in some instances forbidding a poultice or even the proper joining of a broken bone. Such belief is without sense or reason, and is apt in its reaction to lead to an abandonment of faith altogether.

4. What, then, shall be our interpretation, and how shall we teach the people the truth underlying this passage? We should show them that, while the age of special miraculous gifts of healing has passed, the Lord does hear and answer prayer for the sick. Hezekiah prayed and God lengthened his life fifteen years. Isaiah said, however, 'Take a lump of figs. And they took and laid it on the boil, and he recovered.' The prayer of faith needs to be supplemented by the best-known means of cure. Moreover, the prayer of faith for the sick is subject to the limitations of all true prayer. We should always pray in most humble submission to the will of God. 'God's "No" is as really an answer to prayer as God's "Yes."' It cannot be the intention of the Lord to heal every case of bodily sickness. The prayer of faith includes reason and common-sense; more than all, it never seeks to have our will overrule God's will. Its whole spirit cries, 'Thy will be done.' Realizing the words of Christ, 'What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter,' it comes boldly to the throne of grace to find help in every time of sickness, but leaves results with God.[1]

¶ Examples of healing after prayer and anointing are given in Smellie's biography of Evan H. Hopkins. One case is that of Archdeacon Basil Wilberforce. In April, 1889, three years after his recovery, he told it himself, in response to an inquiry from a well-known daily paper.

'I have no shadow of doubt that I was healed by the Lord's blessing upon His own word recorded in James v. 15, 16. But as in so many cases, there was sufficient margin of time, and possibility of change of tissue, between the anointing and the recovery, to justify the sceptic in disconnecting the two. Therefore my experience has been of more value in strengthening my own faith than in the direction of public testimony.

I can only say that my internal ailment was of such a nature that leading surgeons declared it to be incurable except at the cost of a severe operation, which leading physicians thought me unable at the time to endure with safety.

While endeavouring at the seaside to gain strength for the operation, the passage in James was impressed with indescribable force upon my mind. I resisted it, and reasoned with myself against it for two months. I even came up to London, and settled in a house near an eminent surgeon that I might undergo the operation. But the spiritual pressure increased, until at last I sent for *elders*, men of God, full of faith, by whom I was prayed over and anointed; and in a few weeks the internal ailment passed entirely away. This was the Lord's doing and it is marvellous in mine eyes.'[2]

Healing and Prayer.

Ja. v. 14.—'Is any among you sick? let him call for the elders of the Church; and let them pray over him, anointing [or having anointed] him with oil in the name of the Lord' (RV).

An important pamphlet was published recently. It bears the title *The Ministry of Healing;* and it is the report of an official

[1] J. F. Forbes.
[2] *Evan Henry Hopkins*, 192.

committee appointed by the Archbishop of Canterbury to consider what is commonly called faith-healing. The subject attracts much attention at the present time. There are many who wish to know what experts have to say about it. Extravagant claims arouse hopes which are too often disappointed. Yet surprising cures do at times take place. So we are anxious to avoid the extremes alike of scepticism and of superstition. We are not satisfied merely to hear what religious enthusiasts have to say. We want to know the opinions of eminent medical men, especially of those called psychologists, whose special study is the working of the human mind. . . . Some may be disappointed by what they find in the report. They will deem it too cautious, too restrained. But when men with a reputation to lose discuss a matter like faith-healing, where scientific research is far from complete, we naturally expect cautious judgment. None the less, there are certain definite and very significant statements in the report.

1. First of all, what is the nature of ill-health, and what is its relation to the Will of God? Health, says the committee, is an orderly condition of body, mind, and spirit; and is God's primary Will for all His children. Disease is an evil to be combated; and it is to be combated in God's Name and as a way of carrying out His Will. The committee thus emphatically rejects the idea, taught in Mrs. Baker Eddy's system of Christian Science, that ill-health is an illusion. Ill-health, as common-sense affirms, is an actual evil. We cannot 'think it away.' Obviously, like all other forms of evil, it is permitted by God to exist. Why? The committee can only offer suggestions. It may be permitted, say its members, as a result of man's misuse of his freedom. It may be, as a stimulus to human sympathy and scientific research. It may be, as a means of spiritual discipline and efficiency. We cannot solve the problem of evil, because, with our finite minds, we cannot see the whole working of the universe as God sees it. But we do not get rid of our perplexities by saying that evil does not exist, and that, therefore, there is no problem to solve.

2. There are three ways of healing the body, says the committee. We may use material methods—surgery, drugs, and diet; or we may employ psychical methods, which influence the working of the mind; or we may have recourse to devotional and sacramental means of giving religious confidence. In all these agencies faith may, and often does, contribute powerfully to the cure. Very wisely, the committee insists that we must not use faith-healing instead of medical and surgical skill. No sick person must look to a clergyman or faith-healer to do what it is the physician's or surgeon's duty to do. The Church ought to develop in all its members a right attitude of love and confidence towards God. It ought to bring together those who care for the soul and those who care for the body. Its ministers ought to insist on hygiene and plain living as part of the ordinance of God. In sickness it is right to use prayer and other religious avenues to health, but we must not ignore or refuse the scientific discoveries and skill of those who investigate the interaction of spirit, mind, and body. All this is obvious common-sense, you may say. Yes, but it is sometimes forgotten.

What we may term non-religious faith-healing has of late gained a somewhat dangerous vogue because of the 'new psychology.' The war produced much ill-health of which mental anxiety was the cause; and the successful application of new ideas to the cure of 'shell-shock' has excited popular curiosity. The committee's cold wisdom will come to some like a shower of cold water over an excited man. The report points out that there are three forms of mental influence.

(1) There is, first, ordinary education, the training of the conscious mind. Reason and argument, though some seem to forget the fact, are often effective means of overcoming mental and moral disorder. Sound common-sense, such as we give to a child, is also helpful to the full-grown, though cranky, man or woman. Some cases of functional paralysis can be cured in this obvious manner.

(2) In the second place, in mental healing we may use the process of 'suggestion,' which

influences the sub-conscious working of the mind. In suggestion the minds of others influence us, although we are unaware of the fact. Suggestion is far more active and more powerful than we imagine; that is why it is necessary to choose good friends. The hypnotizer works by putting his patient in a state where suggestions are readily received. Now, it is indisputable that the source of many nervous and moral ills lies in the sub-conscious and unconscious parts of the mind. Hence suggestion can be used as a process of cure. But hypnotic suggestion is a dangerous thing to play with, best left to experienced and trustworthy experts.

(3) The third form of mental healing is the much-discussed psycho-analysis. Those who practise this method seek to analyse the contents of what are supposed to be the deepest layers of the mind. By so doing, they believe that they can discover hidden 'complexes,' as it were snags in the mind, which disturb the normal flow of mental activity. There are radical differences, alike of theory and practice, between different psycho-analytical schools. Much popular writing on the subject is merely pretentious, and sometimes disgusting, verbiage. The committee declines to express an opinion as to the value of recent theories of the ultimate origin of mental diseases. Such theories may be modified by further investigation. But the report urges that all who have 'cure of souls' should study recent developments of psychological practice. An emphatic warning against amateur psycho-analysis is given. 'In unskilled hands forces may be liberated that the amateur healer is incapable of controlling.' The last state of that man or woman will be worse than the first. The committee also says truly that some modern psycho-analytical teaching 'is subversive of both moral and religious principles.'

3. We come now to the religious aspect of mental healing. Here the great question is —Can Christian or other religious healers effect cures that are unique? Have they greater powers than men who do not appeal to religious emotion? The committee, in effect, says 'No.' Some cures wrought by spiritual healing are remarkable. But equally remarkable cures can be obtained 'by psychotherapy without religion.' And these can be paralleled by what sometimes happens even in the grave cases of ordinary medical practice. This conclusion will disappoint many religious people. I am glad that a committee of distinguished men should bluntly state what it believes to be true. An honest refusal to make extravagant claims will commend the report to educated men and women within and without our Church.

Needless to say, the committee regards spiritual methods of healing as of great value. Fellowship with God, and trust in His love and mercy, bring peace to the soul. They create in the patient a disposition towards health. He who is uplifted by the presence and power of Christ has that ordered mind and spirit which tends to overcome bodily disorder. The knowledge that the prayers of minister and friends are offered on his behalf gives courage and hope. It may be that health will not be restored. God's Will be done. He who, through Christ, has reached communion with God has entered on that eternal life in which death gains no victory.

So the committee rightly insists that the healing presence of Christ is spiritual in its origin and aims. It may lead to bodily health; but a more important need is that man's whole nature should be raised to a higher plane, fitted for life beyond the grave. To this end the committee welcomes the use of religious services of healing, and suggests that they should be authorized in our Church.

A majority of the committee goes further, and advocates the introduction of a Service of Unction, in which the sick man should be anointed with oil. Those who desire a service of anointing quote the words of St. James, 'Is any among you sick? Let him call the elders of the Church, and let them pray over him, anointing [or having anointed] him with oil in the name of the Lord.' To understand this passage, we must remember that to anoint with oil was in ancient times as common a part of medical treatment as was blood-letting

two centuries ago. St. James thus advises that the elders of the Church should combine prayer with ordinary medical treatment. He does not suggest that the oil should be first blessed, and that then it will have curative properties. 'The prayer of faith,' he says, 'shall save him that is sick.' But in one service now advocated it is proposed to ask God to bless and sanctify oil that those who shall be anointed with it 'may be delivered from all sickness.' Thus the Holy Oil, and not faith, is to cure. The idea seems to me to be mere superstition. There is no rational connection between the oil and the cure, just as there is no rational connection between walking under a ladder and the misfortune which is supposed to follow.

Let us, then, not be tempted to sanction any service of religious healing which opens the way to those magical ideas which continue to dog religion like its shadow. Our Elizabethan forefathers did well to abolish the service of anointing the sick and to use the term 'corrupt' in regard to its development as extreme unction. Our Church in the past has been unwise in not emphasising the close connection that exists between spiritual and bodily health. Let us lay greater stress on this side of the teaching of our Lord; but let us preserve the spiritual simplicity and the rich purity of the faith which Christ gave to mankind.[1]

Energized Prayer.

Ja. v. 16.—'The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.'

It is often plausible, and it is sometimes true, to say that the Revised Version has missed the rhythm of the English language; it is rarely possible to say that it has missed the meaning of the Hebrew or the Greek. There is one case, however. And it is the more surprising in that it is a clear case of insufficient scholarship. The Revisers believed that the word which ends a famous verse in the Epistle of James is active in meaning; scholars are now unanimous in holding that it is passive.

The verse is this: 'The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.' In the Revised Version the translation is a surprise of difference: 'The supplication of a righteous man availeth much in its working.' The first difference is in the change of 'prayer' into 'supplication.' It is a needless change. The Revisers would not have made it if they had not been under a mild bondage to their rule of using the same English word for the same Greek word. Here the Greek word is different from the ordinary word for 'prayer,' and the Revisers simply tell us so.

The rest of the change, great as it is, is all due to a single word in the Greek. It is the word which ends the sentence, the word *energoumenē*. The Authorized translators render this word by two adjectives, 'effectual fervent'; the Revisers by a phrase, 'in its working.'

Now if the Authorized translators had left out the adjective 'effectual,' which creates an awkward tautology with 'availeth,' they would not have been far off the meaning. The Revisers have missed it altogether. They have produced an amazingly feeble statement. How could they allow themselves to think that the Apostle of the style that is terse to obscurity would have been guilty of such a tailing away? Moreover, they have probably made the Apostle say something quite other than he did say. For he did not say that every prayer of a righteous man is of much avail; he said the *fervent* prayer of a righteous man. And finally they have been guilty of a slip in scholarship, as has already been charged against them. In one respect only have they made an improvement on the Authorized translation. They have placed at the end of the sentence their translation of that word which James himself had placed at the end.

If we wished to translate the Greek words literally and in their order, we could not do better than turn to the rendering of Dr. Rendel Harris and adopt it. His rendering is: 'The prayer of a righteous man is of great force [when] energized.' Manifestly

[1] E. W. Barnes, in *The Guardian*, Jan. 25, 1924, p. 69.

the whole virtue of the statement lies in the last word. That is why it is the last word. What does it mean? Dean Armitage Robinson thinks it means 'set in operation' by Divine agency. Dr. Rendel Harris remembers that 'real prayer is connected in a most intimate manner with the influences of the Holy Spirit,' and suggests, though with a 'perhaps,' that that is what is meant by 'energized.' But the meaning is not so obvious or so ordinary as these great expositors would have us think. And it is very much more profitable.

1. James speaks of the prayer of a righteous man. Has he any particular righteous man in his mind? Certainly. His great example of the righteous man who prayed and prevailed is Elijah. In the very next verse he says, 'Elijah was a man of like passions with us, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain; and it rained not on the earth for three years and six months. And he prayed again; and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit.' Well, what was the characteristic of the prayer of Elijah? Its fervency. 'He prayed fervently,' says the Apostle. He used that peculiar Hebrew idiom 'praying he prayed,' so familiar to us in the Old Testament in spite of its frequent disguise in our English versions.

We have only to turn to our word with this in our mind. 'The prayer of a righteous man is of great force [when] energized'—not merely when energized by the Holy Spirit, as every effectual prayer must be; its force comes from the energy that the man himself throws into it. 'The prayer of a righteous man is of great influence when he throws his whole energy into it.' The Apostle has in his mind, and that right vividly, the scene on Mount Carmel after the overthrow of the priests of Baal. 'And Elijah went up to the top of Carmel; and he bowed himself down upon the earth, and put his face between his knees. And he said to his servant, Go up now, look toward the sea. And he went up, and looked, and said, There is nothing. And he said, Go again seven times. And it came to pass at the seventh time that he said, Behold, there ariseth a cloud out of the sea, as small as a man's hand. And he said, Go up, say unto Ahab, Make ready thy chariot, and get thee down that the rain stop thee not.'

2. In Churches in which there is no Liturgy in use there has come a change in the emphasis of prayer within recent years. The emphasis has passed from Confession to Intercession. It is within the memory of many that the first prayer in public worship was called the Long Prayer, and consisted mainly of acts of confession. That prayer is now shortened. It is often shorter than the prayer that follows it, which is known as the Intercessory Prayer. It is impossible to miss the fact of the change. What is the cause of it?

It has two causes. One cause is the discovery of Intercession. The Christian conscience has been slowly awakening to the amazing absurdity of prayer to God that begins and ends with self. Slowly it has been awakening to the existence of a world in need, a world to which the arm of only one in a million of us can reach, but which can be gathered into our interests and brought under the influence of our intercessions.

The other cause is the demand for absolute sincerity. Undoubtedly the feeling has been growing that the proper place for confession of sin is the secret chamber. There is still room for confession in public. We may still confess our sins as a Church, as a Community, as a Country. But such confession must be general. When the leader in prayer endeavours to confess the sins of the individual sinners before him, it is inevitable that they should feel that, while he is able to recall many an object for intercession which they had forgotten, he cannot bring to remembrance one in a hundred of the sins of which they have been guilty. And the leader in prayer, knowing this, has felt that it is not possible to comfess particular sins and be sincere. For the particular sins he has most acquaintance with are the sins of his own heart and life, and the public worship of God is not the occasion for confessing them.

3. This, then, we have attained to. We know that the first demand upon us is that our prayer should be sincere. What we have not yet learned, but must now strive to learn, and to practise, is that it must also be energetic. If intercessory prayer is to prevail, if it is to have much influence, we must energize it, we must throw into it the energy of our whole personality.

(1) We must throw our *mind* into it. For we must see to it that we are praying for the right things, and that we are praying to the right God.

Are we praying for the right things? James says, 'We know not what to pray for as we ought.' 'As we ought,' he says. Suppose we are praying for missions. Do we know *what* we are praying for? Success, we say. What is success? Success in what? Do we know what missions are for? Do we know with any clearness what the missionaries are doing? Do we know any mission or any missionary intimately? Without some real knowledge we cannot pray as we ought, because we do not know what to pray for.

But we must also pray to the right God. In the late war nothing perhaps occurred to shake the faith of the believer in Christ—at any rate of the half-believer—more than the reported prayers of the German Emperor. What was wrong with them? No one who has put his mind into the matter will answer and say 'insincerity.' What was wrong with them was that they were offered to the wrong God. They were offered to a God who is not the God and Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. They were offered to a German God. But the true God has no respect of persons or of nations.

(2) Again, we must throw our *feelings* into our prayer. This is the most obvious evidence of energy in prayer. And we are too timid about it. Hezekiah, the great king, prayed so energetically that the tears ran down his face. So did Nehemiah, the aristocratic governor. So did Paul, the once proud Pharisee. We are more careful to hide our emotions. Are we as careful to have them?

(3) Last of all, we must throw our *will* into our prayer. Now there is no way of throwing the will into prayer that is so mighty in making prayer a force as the way of answering our own prayer. This is not a way of escape from the difficulties of prayer. It is not another form of the lame conclusion that whatever else prayer does it does good to those who pray. This is one of God's ways of answering prayer.

There is nothing more certain than that God often gives us the opportunity of answering our own prayers. And surely there can be nothing more gracious. For in this way prayer does do good to the man who prays, and a very much greater good than the comfortable feeling that it is a good thing to pray, which is all that some of us seem to think can be got with certainty out of it. Does it cost something to fulfil one's own prayers? That is where the good of it lies. One may say with scarcely a reserve that its good is just in proportion to its sacrifice.

¶ There is no finer example of how we may have the gracious opportunity of answering our own prayers than that which occurs in the record of the early life of Dr. Hudson Taylor.[1] It is a long story, but to abridge it would be to lose the flavour of its gentle sincerity. This is the story: 'After concluding my last service about ten o'clock that night, a poor man asked me to go and pray with his wife, saying that she was dying. I readily agreed, and on the way to his house asked him why he had not sent for the priest, as his accent told me he was an Irishman. He had done so, he said, but the priest refused to come without a payment of eighteen pence, which the man did not possess, as the family was starving. Immediately it occurred to my mind that all the money I had in the world was a solitary half-crown, and that it was in one coin; moreover, that while the basin of water-gruel I usually took for supper was awaiting me, and there was sufficient in the house for breakfast in the morning, I certainly had nothing for dinner on the coming day.

Somehow or other there was at once a stoppage in the flow of joy in my heart. But

[1] *Hudson Taylor in Early Years*, 133.

instead of reproving myself I began to reprove the poor man, telling him that it was very wrong to have allowed things to get into such a state as he described, and that he ought to have applied to the relieving officer. His answer was that he had done so, and was told to come at eleven o'clock next morning, but that he feared his wife might not live through the night.

"Ah," thought I, "if only I had two shillings and a sixpence instead of this half-crown, how gladly would I give these poor people a shilling!" But to part with the half-crown was far from my thoughts. I little dreamed that the truth of the matter simply was that I could trust God plus one and sixpence, but was not prepared to trust Him only, without any money at all in my pocket.

My conductor led me into a court, down which I followed him with some degree of nervousness. I had found myself there before, and at my last visit had been roughly handled. My tracts had been torn to pieces, and such a warning given me not to come again that I felt more than a little concerned. Still, it was the path of duty, and I followed on. Up a miserable flight of stairs into a wretched room he led me; and oh, what a sight there presented itself! Four or five children stood about, their sunken cheeks and temples all telling unmistakably the story of slow starvation, and lying on a wretched pallet was a poor, exhausted mother, with a tiny infant thirty-six hours old moaning rather than crying at her side, for it too seemed spent and failing.

"Ah," thought I, "if I had two shillings and a sixpence, instead of half a crown, how gladly should they have one and sixpence of it." But still a wretched unbelief prevented me from obeying the impulse to relieve their distress at the cost of all I possessed.

It will scarcely seem strange that I was unable to say much to comfort these poor people. I needed comfort myself. I began to tell them, however, that they must not be cast down; that though their circumstances were very distressing there was a kind and loving Father in heaven. But something within me cried, "You hypocrite! telling these unconverted people about a kind and loving Father in heaven, and not prepared yourself to trust Him without half a crown."

I was nearly choked. How gladly would I have compromised with conscience, if I had had a florin and a sixpence! I would have given the florin thankfully and kept the rest. But I was not yet prepared to trust in God alone, without the sixpence.

To talk was impossible under these circumstances, yet strange to say I thought I should have no difficulty in praying. Prayer was a delightful occupation in those days. Time thus spent never seemed wearisome, and I knew no lack of words. I seemed to think that all I should have to do would be to kneel down and pray, and that relief would come to them and to myself together.

"You asked me to come and pray with your wife," I said to the man, "let us pray." And I knelt down.

But no sooner had I opened my lips with "Our Father who art in heaven" than conscience said within, "Dare you mock God? Dare you kneel down and call Him Father with that half-crown in your pocket?"

Such a time of conflict then came upon me as I have never experienced before or since. How I got through that form of prayer I know not, and whether the words uttered were connected or disconnected I cannot tell. But I arose from my knees in great distress of mind.

The poor father turned to me and said, "You see what a terrible state we are in, sir. If you can help us, for God's sake do!"

At that moment the word flashed into my mind, "Give to him that asketh of thee." And in the word of a King there is power.

I put my hand into my pocket, and slowly drawing out the half-crown, gave it to the man, telling him that it might seem a small matter for me to relieve them, seeing that I was comparatively well off, but that in parting with that coin I was giving him my all; what I had been trying to tell them was indeed true—*God* really was a *Father* and might be trusted. The joy all came back in full floodtide to my heart. I could say anything and

feel it then, and the hindrance to blessing was gone—gone, I trust, for ever.

Not only was the poor woman's life saved; but my life, as I fully realized, had been saved too. It might have been a wreck—would have been, probably, as a Christian life—had not grace at that time conquered, and the striving of God's Spirit been obeyed.

I well remember how that night, as I went home to my lodging, my heart was as light as my pocket. The dark, deserted streets resounded with a hymn of praise that I could not restrain. When I took my basin of gruel before retiring, I would not have exchanged it for a prince's feast. I reminded the Lord as I knelt at my bedside of His own Word, "He that giveth to the poor lendeth to the Lord"; I asked Him not to let my loan be a long one, or I should have no dinner next day. And with peace within and peace without, I spent a happy, restful night.'

We have said that when God gives us the opportunity of answering our own intercession the benefit is ours. So Dr. Hudson Taylor found. But the benefit is also His. For in that way is the gospel preached, in that way does the Kingdom of God make progress. What tells for God more than character? What makes us sure of the love of God more than our experience of the love of man?[1]

Ye are always singing the good Lord's praise,
  And publishing all that His hand
Has wrought for you in the bygone days,
  And all that His heart has planned.

And verily all that ye say is true;
  For I gratefully confess
That whatever the Lord has done for you
  He has done for me no less.

But when I remember the weary ways
  Which my feeble feet have trod,
And the human love which all my days
  Has helped me along the road,
Then the love of man is my song of praise
  As well as the love of God.

[1] J. Hastings, in *The Expository Times*, xxvi. 292ff.

And I hardly think that I would have seen
  The love of God so clear,
Unless the love of man had been
  So visible and near.

Confession.

Ja. v. 16.—'Confess your faults one to another.'

1. These words imply, in the first place, that our religious life is not an isolated thing between each man and God, a thing with which no other man has anything to do. All Christians are members of a Body. If they come much in contact they are nearly related members. And no one has a right to fancy that his faults concern himself alone, and that no one else has an interest in his being a good man. It is true that, for the sake of Christian Liberty, there are few cases in which one man has a right to interfere with the faults of another; but it is not at all true that, because no one has a right to interfere with us, therefore we need not regard anyone but ourselves in this matter. There are many faults for which we are not responsible to any authority but our own conscience; but among these faults far the larger part affect our neighbour as well as ourselves, and though our neighbour has no right to interfere, we shall have to answer to God for the mischief that our faults have done to that neighbour.

2. But this is not the only bond that binds us to our neighbour. The text implies, further, that we may get much help by being open about our faults. The Apostle goes on to say, 'Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed.' Prayer is a means by which everyone can help his neighbour, and prayer is not the only means, but only one amongst many. Our friends can give us sympathy; can sometimes give us advice; can always give us encouragement; very often a friend's experience will help out ours, and make us see more clearly than we could do alone what we ought to do.

¶ We sat in the library—where boxes were

being packed and books lying about the room, prior to departure for Bordighera. And then I opened my heart to him as I had hardly ever opened it to any stranger before. Doubts and fears — sore burdens just then — were bluntly put before him, and he sat and listened with the utmost patience. It was strange—and yet it was not strange—to find myself talking to him so freely. I saw, I felt, his holiness and nearness to God, and yet I should not have been afraid to confess to him most secret sins. There was a humanity about him, and a searching honesty, which, along with his sympathy, made me feel that he would understand me. He would not cast me out. . . .

Just before I left he said—and I can hear him now—'But after all, whatever help or comfort any one may try to give you, it is but to follow the advice of Jesus. "Enter into thy closet, and shut to thy door, and pray to thy Father in secret"—pour out your heart to God—get down on your knees—He will help you as no one else can, and will give you an answer of peace.'[1]

3. But the chief benefit of being ready to confess faults which our conscience urges us to confess is, that we clear our own minds and strengthen our own wills. It makes a wonderful difference in our power of avoiding a fault, and it makes a wonderful difference in the mischief which a fault can do to us, if we only have the courage to tell it to someone who cares for us.

(1) In the first place, a concealed fault has a most extraordinary power of infecting the whole character. It spreads its mischief far beyond itself. We do not pray so calmly or so simply, because this secret sin seems to mock our prayers. We do not go about our ordinary duties with any heart, because even though they are done, and well done, we feel as if they would be all spoilt by this one secret fall. We can have no enjoyment in religion, because our conscience mingles reproaches with all that we do. The fault may not really be half so bad as we fancy. Yet, because it is secret, it will take away all the springs of our desire to do right, and will rob our heart of its chief attraction towards God. The sin, while it is concealed, seems to enter into all that we think or do. The fact of our concealing it seems to make it peculiarly our own. And all that comes from us partakes of it. All this is changed the moment we have told it. The act of telling it seems, as it were, to circumscribe it within its own proper limits. It is wrong; but there is the whole of it clearly in view. We have not got rid of it by telling it. But we have got rid of the infection which it carried with it. We have shut it up within itself. We have separated ourselves from it. It has lost its power to taunt and mock. We are still bound to be sorry for it; but we have no longer reason to fear it. While it is concealed, we feel like hypocrites, we seem to be false, and whatever we do right only adds to this feeling. What business have we to do right, and pretend to be servants of God, while we are secretly cherishing an unclean thing? But when the fault is confessed, we are hypocrites no more, but penitent.

¶ I am convinced that confession plays a tremendous part in religious life. I don't think it is too much to say that until a man confesses his sin to another man he can never really be spiritually vital. One knows scores of men who carry guilty consciences, and who think they square accounts by confessing their sins in secret to God, and genuinely trying not to commit those sins again. Such men can never help another; such men haven't the ghost of an idea what redemption means. They pretend. Their religion is a form. Their life is a dead letter.

An interesting story occurs to me. A friend of mine wanted very much to help a particular friend of his who was involved in some trouble with a girl. He tried and tried, in vain. He asked me why he couldn't do this thing. He wasn't lacking in sympathy; he wanted to help his friend; why couldn't he? I got him to go over his past life. He found that there was an unconfessed sin on his conscience. As

[1] *George MacDonald and His Wife*, 537.

a schoolboy he had stolen money from his father. It was a hard task, but he went to his father and confessed his sin. The result was not only ability to help his friend, but a real pentecostal joy in his own heart. He said to me, 'Now I'm ready to go all the way in this thing.' How simply a man can be born again! One act of honesty. Reality![1]

(2) Again, closely connected with this is the fact that a concealed fault lays a peculiar and very heavy burden on the soul. The remorse that we feel every now and then for a secret fault is far beyond what we feel after we have told it. All men agree in this, that to tell a fault lightens the burden at once. And in extreme cases it has been found that great criminals have been driven even to face the gallows in order to obtain this relief. The burden of a secret fault has been found to transcend in pain all other punishments that God's Providence brings on crime. And this experience of great crimes is but the magnified experience of all faults, however small. A secret fault always lays an additional burden on the soul, simply because it is secret.

¶ An occasional visitor at our house was known all over the surrounding country as the Hermit, for his name was never discovered. He was perpetually on the move, visiting in turn every house within a radius of forty or fifty miles; and once about every seven or eight weeks he called on us to receive a few articles of food—enough for the day's consumption. He had a small, sun-parched face, and silvery long hair; but his features were fine, his teeth white and even, his eyes clear grey and keen as a falcon's. There was always a set expression of deep mental anguish on his face, intensified with perhaps a touch of insanity, which made it painful to look at him.

On arriving at the house, where the dogs would become frantic with terror and rage at sight of him, he would stand resting himself for eight or ten minutes; then in a strange language, which might have been Hebrew or Sanscrit, for there was no person learned enough in the country to understand it, he would make a long speech or prayer in a clear ringing voice, intoning his words in a monotonous sing-song. His speech done, he would beg, in broken Spanish, for the usual charity. From the sounds of certain oft-recurring expressions in his recitations we children called him 'Con-stair Lo-vair.' It was commonly reported that he had at one period of his life committed some terrible crime, and that, pursued by the phantoms of remorse, he had fled to this distant region, where he would never be met and denounced by any former companion, and had adopted his singular mode of life by way of penance. This was, of course, mere conjecture, for nothing could be extracted from him. When closely questioned or otherwise interfered with, then old Con-stair Lo-vair would show that his long cruel penance had not yet banished the devil from his heart. A terrible wrath would disfigure his countenance and kindle his eyes with demoniac fire; and in sharp ringing tones, that wounded like strokes, he would pour forth a torrent of words in his unknown language, doubtless invoking every imaginable curse on his tormentor.

For upwards of twenty years after I as a small child made his acquaintance he continued faithfully pursuing his dreary rounds, exposed to cold and rain in winter and to the more trying heats of summer; until at last he was discovered lying dead on the plain, wasted by old age and famine to a mere skeleton, and even in death still crushed down with that awful burden he had carried for so many years. Thus, consistent to the end, and with his secret untold to any sympathetic human soul, perished poor old Con-stair Lo-vair, the strangest of all strange beings I have met with in my journey through life.[1]

(3) Again, confessing the fault pledges the will to try to prevent a return of it, and no other pledge is equally strong. The man who is hiding a secret fault says to himself, 'I will not tell of this, but I will never do it again.' Now this does not always fail; but it very often fails. The temptation returns stronger than before. The man feels that to

[1] Harold Begbie, *Life Changers*, 116.

[1] W. H. Hudson, *Far Away and Long Ago*, 13.

do twice what he has done once will not make much difference. It will not very much lower his self-respect, for that was already struck down by the first fault. It will not affect the respect in which others regard him; for they know nothing of what he has done, and of course he means them to know nothing of what he is now tempted to do. So the fault is repeated; and another temptation brings another fall. But when we have confessed a fault we have by that very act put a barrier between ourselves and the past. Next time the temptation comes we have the double check of our own conscience and of our professed resolution. The second fault seems not merely a slight addition to the first, but as if it would be an altogether new and much worse fall. The resolution of the man who is hiding within him the memory of wrong is sure to be weak, wavering, fitful. The resolution of the man whose repentance has been stamped and marked by confession is clear and strong.

¶ The worst thing about sin is just that it is there—an irrevocable fact which the sinner has put there. When he realizes this he feels it as a burden: he cannot sleep, or eat, or work, or play as once he did. Yet that is a precious pain. The far deeper danger is that one should grow accustomed to it, as the Swiss peasant to the growing load of hay or Milo to his ox, until he is able complacently to 'draw iniquity with a cart rope.' The unblushed-for past—the dead weight of sinful facts faced deliberately and carried lightly—that is a doom far deeper than the most oppressive load.[1]

4. Two questions remain.

(1) To whom should we confess our faults? and how? Both of these questions must be left very much to our own judgment. As a general rule, it may be said that one great duty of intimate friends is to supply each other with that help which Christian sympathy can give. A man has almost always among his friends someone to whom he would not be utterly unwilling to tell all that lies on his own conscience. There may be some matters that require more experienced advice. There are some confessions which we are bound to make, not for the sake of ourselves and for our own spiritual improvement, but for the sake of justice: thus, for instance, if we have either purposely or unintentionally accused our neighbour falsely, it is to himself that we are bound to make the confession. All these points must be left to our own decision.

¶ When we have wrongly opposed another, confession is part of the reparation due to him; occult compensation, from the very fact that it saves our pride, can never fully satisfy the debt.[1]

(2) So, again, it must be left to our own judgment how we shall confess a fault. Nothing is more mischievous than to confess it in such way as to give ourselves pleasure in doing so. It is peculiarly mischievous to take such an opportunity for indulging our love for talking about ourselves. Analysing our own character, talking about it, confessing not our acts or words but our feelings, confessing what we are not really ashamed to confess, confessing trifles as if they were serious sins: all these are weak and mischievous forms of egotism. What we do need to confess (and it will only be sometimes) are deeds or words, definite acts of the will, such as we feel to be a burden to us, such as we fear to have detected, such as make us feel ashamed to be praised, or esteemed, or liked.

> And when *she* failed, she had a charming way
> Of owning she was wrong. She didn't set
> Herself upon a pedestal and say
> That *we* were 'cross,' while *she* was 'nervy yet.'
> 'I was cross, too!' she said. And, closer than before,
> We clung to her, and loved her all the more.[2]

[1] John Kelman, *The Road*, 3.

[1] George Tyrrell.

[2] Fay Inchfawn, *Homely Verses of a Home-Lover*, 15.

Elijah.

Ja. v. 17.—'Elijah was a man of like passions with us' (RV).

1. What are we meant to learn from the life and character of the prophet Elijah? Why is his example set before us so fully in the Bible? What has he to do with us—the solitary prophet of the wilderness, fighting his life-and-death battle with the idolatrous king and queen of Israel; slaying the prophets of Baal on Carmel, and flying for his own life from the vengeance of Jezebel; clothed with more than human power and force, seeing sights and hearing voices that are beyond the reach of men; raising the dead, multiplying the meal and the oil, ministered to by the ravens of the sky, fed in the wilderness by angels; foretelling the coming storm on Mount Carmel and bringing down the fire from heaven; running before the rushing horses and chariot of Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel; learning the secrets of God's presence and counsels in the caves of Horeb; and finally vanishing from earth in the chariot and horses of fire? What have we to do with him, with his terrible wildness, his terrible zeal, his terrible powers, his terrible words?

So strange, so different from all that is in our life, so wild and awful—what was he the example of to us? What can we learn as we read his history? Can he teach us anything which we in our place and measure can really copy? Surely he can. His fierce and consuming zeal is as far from us as his strange and supernatural force and knowledge, or the miraculous powers with which he was clothed. But under all this he was at bottom a man, a true and holy servant of the God of truth and righteousness. At bottom, under all his strange appearance and terrible doings, Elijah was, as James tells us, but 'a man subject to like passions as we are.' And, if we only look, we shall see the plain lesson which his example teaches us.

2. The lesson is that of perfect trust in God. Elijah took no thought for himself amid the evils and dangers to which his work as God's servant exposed him. The famine came, and upon him it would be as well as upon others. But it was enough for him that God sent him to the brook Cherith, with the promise that the ravens should feed him there. 'So he went and did according unto the word of the Lord: for he went and dwelt by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan.' It was enough for him that God sent him to Zarephath with the promise, 'Behold, I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee. So he arose and went to Zarephath'; and on the faith of God's promise trusted himself to the cruse of oil and the barrel of meal. When God sent him to Ahab to announce the end of the famine, he went as boldly, with as sure a confidence in God's word and God's protection, as when he went to announce its beginning. When the great cause came to be tried between God and Baal, the victory might be long in coming, but it was sure to come in the end. Everyone might be on the other side, king and people; the prophets of Baal might be four hundred and fifty against the single witness for God; hour after hour might wear away, without anything to decide the doubts and the controversy; there he sat, waiting his time, looking on unmoved and undismayed, himself against the world, so confident as to be able to mock and glory over his opponents, whom he saw already confounded and overthrown; certain of the coming proof that the Lord, He is the God, certain of the coming storm though the heavens were yet without a cloud.

And yet Elijah was, as James says, 'a man of like passions with us.' It was not that he was without feeling. It was not that the sight and circumstances of those evil days passed over him without making an impression on him. There were moments when the utter hopelessness of the fight he was making on behalf of truth and the cause of God overcame him. 'It is enough,' was his cry when he requested for himself that he might die; 'It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers.' There were moments when he appealed to his Master

to look upon the unequal struggle. 'What doest thou here, Elijah?' spake the Voice to the fugitive, who had fled for refuge to the howling wilderness in which stood the mount of God. 'And he said, I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts: for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away.' Never did words describe more touchingly the bitter keenness of disappointment, the utter sense of exhaustion, and of being left all alone. Yet a word of the Lord is enough to call up once more all his faith and courage, and to send him out again to fight the battle. Refreshed and strengthened by the presence of his Master, he goes forth as confident, and as resolute, and as sure of victory as before.

3. Is there nothing in all this that makes an appeal to our conscience? Is there nothing that says how noble, how excellent a thing it is to have the heart and soul stayed upon God, and to be afraid of nothing for the sake of what is true and right and good? Is such an example needless among us? Because our condition and circumstances are so different, because we know so much more of God's will and Spirit than even the great prophet knew, has he indeed nothing to teach us? Can we learn no lesson from the calm certainty with which he waited amid the impatient and unbelieving crowds, knowing how much depended on the right and the truth being proved, knowing how great was the stake at issue, yet sure that, though all for the present was against him, God's cause would prevail? Are we never in circumstances when all seems against us; and not only against us, but against the truth and the cause of Christ? Have we nothing to learn from the way in which this calm waiting and trust were joined, when the time came, with ready and bold action? Are we so brave in the cause of right, are we so free from shame for Christ's sake, does the fear of having power and numbers against us tell so little on our notions of what is right and wrong, that we do not want to be taught by the fearless boldness of Elijah?

Take away all that is strange and extraordinary in the circumstances of Elijah and the work to which he was specially called, and you will find nothing in his character but what ought also to be realized in the character of every faithful and true follower of Jesus Christ, whatever his condition, wherever he is called to work for his Master.[1]

¶ The test to-day, as well as in the time of Elijah, only requires to be sufficiently strong, and of the right kind, in order to prove the genuineness or otherwise of our religion. We have an example of this in the case of St. Francis of Assisi, who at the risk of his life went with some of his followers to the Sultan. 'Sire,' said a number of the priests of Mahomet to the Sultan, 'thou art expert in the law and art bound to maintain and guard it. We command thee by Mahomet, who gave it to us, that the heads of these men be cut off.' Francis, who had already by his fearless yet loving, Christlike spirit, made a deep impression upon the Sultan, replied to him, 'Your priests will not talk with me, perhaps they would be more ready to act. Have a fire lighted and I will go into the fire with them, and you will see by the results which faith is the truest and the holiest.' When Francis began to speak there were a number of priests standing round him, but before he had finished they had quietly taken themselves off. The idea had filled them with horror. The Sultan, perceiving their absence, remarked sarcastically, 'I do not think that any of my priests are inclined to face flames and torture for the defence of their faith.'[2]

Passion in Prayer.

Ja. v. 17.—'Elias . . . prayed in his prayer' (AVm).

ELIJAH had a heavenly name: but he had, to begin with, an earthly nature. He was a man, to begin with, 'subject to like passions as we

[1] R. W. Church, *Village Sermons*, 3rd Ser., 249.
[2] T. Payne, *The Greatest Force on Earth*, 27.

are.' Elijah was a man indeed of passions 'all compact.' We never see Elijah but he is in a passion, as we say. In a passion of anger at Ahab. In a passion of scorn and contempt at the priests of Baal. In a passion of fury and extermination against all idolatry, and against all organised uncleanness. In a passion of prayer and intercession. And, once —for, after all, Elijah is flesh and blood, and not stone and iron—once in a passion of despondency and melancholy under the juniper tree. Elijah was a great man. There was a great mass of manhood in Elijah. He was a mountain of a man, with a whirlwind for a heart. Elijah did nothing by halves. What he did, he did with all his heart. And what a heart it was! He, among us, who has the most heart: he, among us, who has the most manhood: he, among us, who has the most passion in his heart—the most love and the most hate; the most anger and the most meekness; the most scorn, and the most contempt, and the most humility, and the most honour; the most fear, and the most faith; the most melancholy, and the most sunny spirit; the most agony of prayer, both in his body and in his soul, and the most victorious assurance that his prayer is already answered before it is yet offered—that man is the likest of us all to Elijah, and that man has Elijah's mantle fallen upon him.

James, the brother of the Lord, and the supposed author of this Epistle, was nicknamed 'Camel-knees' by the early Church. James had been so slow of heart to believe that his brother, Jesus, could possibly be the Christ, that, after he was brought to believe, he was never off his knees. And when they came to coffin him, it was like coffining the knees of a camel rather than the knees of a man, so hard, so worn, so stiff were they with prayer. The translators tell us that they have preserved James's intense Hebrew idiom for us in the margin. Now that apostolic and prophetic idiom in the margin takes hold of the imagination. It touches the heart. It speaks to the conscience. For, even after we have, in a way, prayed, off and on, for many years, in the pulpit, at the family altar, and on the platform in the prayer-meeting,—how seldom, if ever, 'we pray in our prayers!' We repeat choice passages of Scripture. We recite, with sonorous voices, most excellent evangelical extracts from Isaiah and Ezekiel. We declaim our petitions in a way that would do credit to a stage surrounded with spectators. We praise one man, and we blame another man, in our prayers. We have an eye, now to this man present, and now to that man absent. We pronounce appreciations, and we pass judgments in our prayers. We flatter the great, and we fall down before kings. We argue, and we debate, and we reason together, sometimes with men, and sometimes with God. 'Come, now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord.'

Are you old enough to remember Dr. Candlish's forenoon prayer? We used to say that his first prayer was enough for the whole of that day. He so 'prayed in that prayer.' He so came and reasoned together with God in that prayer. Sometimes he would take us to our knees till we had knees in those days like James the Just, as he led us through the whole of Paul's reasoning with God and with man in the Epistle to the Romans. Sometimes he would argue like Job, and would not be put down; and then he would weep like Jeremiah and dance and sing like Isaiah. That great preacher was an Elijah both in his passions and in his prayers. He would put all his passions at one time into an Assembly speech as he stood before Ahab, and at another time into a great sermon to his incomparably privileged people: but I liked his passions best in his half-hour prayer on a Sabbath morning; he so 'prayed in that prayer.'

You have not Elijah's prophetical office, not James's apostolical inspiration, not Dr. Candlish's oratorical power: but you have plenty of passion if you would but make the right use of it. You are all vicious or virtuous men, prayerful or prayerless men; and, then, you are effectual or unavailing men in your prayers—just as your passions are. You have all quite sufficient variety and amount of passion to make you mighty men with God and with men, if only your passions found

their proper vent in your prayers. You have all passion enough—far too much—in other things. What an ocean of all kinds of passion your heart is! What depths of self-love are in your heart! And what a master-passion is your self-love! Like Aaron's serpent, your passion of self-love swallows all the rest of the serpents of which your heart is full. What hate, again, you have in your heart, at the persons and the things you do so hate! What hope also for the things you so passionately hope for! Yes: you have passions enough to make you a saint in heaven, or a devil in hell: and they are every day making you either the one or the other. We have all plenty of passion, and to spare: only, it is all missing the mark. It is all sound and fury, a tale told, a life laid out and lived, by an idiot. Our passions, all given us for our blessedness, are all making us and other people miserable. Our passions, and their proper objects, were all committed to us of God to satisfy, and to delight, and to regale, and to glorify us. But we have taken our passions and have made them the instruments and the occasions of our self-destruction. We are self-blinded, and self-besotted men: and it is the prostitution of our passions that has done it.

The Bible, naturally, shows a preference for men of 'like passions' with itself. The more passionateness any man puts into his prayer, the more space and the more praise the Bible gives to that man. Jacob will come at once to every mind. Now, why does Jacob come to all our minds at this moment? Simply because he was a prince in the passionateness of his great prayer at the Jabbok. What a tempest of passion broke upon the throne of God all that night! What a storm of fear and of despair, and of remorse, and of self-accusation, and of recollection, and of imagination, and of all that was within Jacob! Jacob's passions literally tore him to pieces that terrible night. There was not another night like that for passion in prayer for two thousand years.

And take Hannah as an example to wives and mothers. What a passionate, heart-broken, half-insane woman was Hannah! For, how she 'prayed in her prayers'! She was absolutely drunk with her sorrowful passion. She would have fallen on the floor of the sanctuary as she reeled in her passion, had she not caught hold of the horns of the altar. And Isaiah,—'Ah, that thou wouldest rend the heavens,'—and he rent them as he prayed: 'that thou wouldest come down, that the mountains might flow down at thy presence. . . . But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away'—and a thousand such passionate passages, both in preaching and in prayer. And Ezra, who is too little known. 'At the evening sacrifice I arose up from my heaviness; and having rent my garment and my mantle, I fell upon my knees, and spread out my hands unto the Lord my God, and said, O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God: for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens. . . . Now when Ezra had prayed, and when he had confessed, weeping and casting himself down before the house of God, there assembled unto him out of Israel a very great congregation of men and women and children: for the people wept very sore.' There also is passion in prayer for you; and men, and women, and children, all joining in it!

But time would fail me to tell all the passionate prayers of the prophets, of the Psalmist, of the friend at midnight, and of the importunate widow, and all ending in the Garden of Gethsemane. No: not all ending there—alas, alas! would God that they did,—for our Lord passionately foretells certain passionate scenes that we shall all see, if we do not take a passionate part in them. 'For, when once the Master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without . . . saying Lord, Lord, open unto us! there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves cast out.' There is passion in *that* prayer, and in *this*:

'Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb!'

And, now to sum it all up, and to lay it all to heart. Let every man here henceforth 'pray in his prayers.' That is to say, let every man put his passion into his prayers. And, then, what will take place in every man and in every man's house who lays up in his heart, and practises in his life, the lesson of this great Scripture? This will take place in every such man, and in every such man's household. His heart will, by degrees, be drawn off the things of this deceitful and sinful world: and it will be directed in upon the great world within him, the great world before him, and the great world above him. The heat of his heart will all begin to burn after heavenly things. And the man will, gradually, as he continues to pray, become a new man, a new son, a new lover, a new husband, a new father. His passions, that made him so impossible to live with, will all become subdued, and softened, and sweetened, till he will be like a little child in your hands. He was at one time so hard, and so harsh, and so impossible to please, and so full of his own ideas and opinions and prejudices and passions, so loud, and so wilful: but you never hear him now; he thinks you so much better than himself; he so despises himself and so respects and honours you. Patience and meekness and silence, and his daily cross, are now the only passions of his heart. Nothing does all that in any house but prayer. Nothing silences, and subdues, and sanctifies our passions but prayer.[1]

Converting a Soul.

Ja. v. 19, 20.—'If any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; let him know that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.'

THESE words are the last in this Epistle and they come in with a strange abruptness. The words have certainly no connection whatever with what goes before; but they are words from the heart—last words. The writer always speaks as if he remembered his own words, 'For what is your life? It is even a vapour.' It is as if, when James came to the conclusion of his Epistle, God had told him he had but one more sentence to write, and he writes the thing that lies nearest his soul.

What is James's last advice? It is to carry on the work he himself has been engaged in; and this work is the converting of a sinner. Unhappily that has often been made a matter of personal pride. Men have been anxious to be able to reckon up their converts and get the glory to themselves, forgetting the million influences that have been at work upon those converts. As it is the most glorious of all works, so it is the most difficult. The man who would convert a soul must be willing to forget himself and see himself passed by. He must toil for days and years, never forgetting the task he is engaged in, and he must watch narrowly his own life, not only to hinder the effects of an ungodly example, but to put himself more and more in tune with the work, looking always and only to Jesus Christ.

To 'hide a multitude of sins' does not mean that we are to be saved because we have been the means of saving the soul of another. To imagine that our prayers, or our penance, or our good deeds, or our high moral character, can save us is to show our ignorance of ourselves, our distance from God, and our contempt for Christ and His redemption. James's meaning is that the one who is the means of turning back a soul from its apostasy is to rejoice in this, that that soul has been saved from spiritual ruin and the multitude of its sins covered up and forgiven. We may be the instruments in this great work, but the glory is Christ's, through whose blood all sin is forgiven.[1]

¶ Early one morning he went out from Northfield to conduct a camp meeting in the woods for men drawn out from the Jerry McCauley Mission for 'down and outers' in New York. Before Jowett spoke one of the men prayed for him. 'Oh, Lord, we pray for

[1] A. Whyte, *Lord Teach us to Pray*, 67.

[1] J. P. Struthers, *The Word and the Road*, 235.

our brother. Now blot him out! Reveal Thy glory to us in such blazing splendour that he shall be forgotten.' Jowett declared that this supplication was inspired, and expressed a hope that it was answered.[1]

¶ To one who tried to follow her, at however great a distance, in her work of rousing people sunk in vice and wretchedness to a sense of moral responsibility, she gave the wholesome advice, 'When you want to lead any one to Jesus, remember you must point, and take care not to stand in the way yourself.'[1]

[1] Arthur Porritt, *John Henry Jowett*, 128.

[1] *Sister Dora*, 199.

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